

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

An Inductive Study of

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

by

O. WILLIAM COOPER

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A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

**An Inductive Study of
THE GOSPEL OF LUKE**

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WITH DEEPEST GRATITUDE

Writing is only one part of all the things that go into the production of a study such as this. Without the assistance of others, I would never have been able to complete this work. Several people have been particularly helpful in bringing this study to completion. My wife, Ruth, has given me the freedom to spend the necessary time to produce it.

Several people have worked innumerable hours to produce these volumes. Without the help of Jim Arns, Ruth Cooper, Rev. Mary Neil and Dr. Peter Stone It could not have been completed. Their work and encouragement has been a real blessing to me.

My prayer is that God may bless each one of you in a very special way for your tireless efforts on on behalf of this project.

With Deepest Gratitude,
Dr. O. William Cooper

INTRODUCTION

We live in a world characterized by change and upheaval. People have replaced old norms and power structures. People have almost forgotten some things once feared. A few short months ago the Soviet nuclear power and the threat of overt military activity seemed very real. That fear, rightly or wrongly, has faded seriously. At the same time, things that were never thought of in the past are now dominating our national attention. A decade ago, most people did not know the meaning of AIDS. Now however, it is a frightening scourge upon our culture.

The world is becoming more convinced that its recent values and directions are flawed. Clearly their former stances were ineffective. People are becoming alarmed. Having discovered what is not working, they are not really certain of a system that *will* work. They are open to options that were not viable just a few short years ago. There is a desire, especially among the young, to find a place where they can commit themselves, something that is worth living for, something for which they would be willing to die.

There was a time when most people in our culture knew a substantial body of information about the Christian faith. This has been declining at a regular, alarming pace both inside and outside the church. Increasing numbers of people, even inside the church, do not know the stories of the Bible.

The ability of Christians to clearly articulate what they believe has declined with shocking regularity. It is not uncommon to hear devout Christians identifying what they believe in terms that clearly are contrary to the Scriptures. It is just as common for these people to express their faith in terms that would be quite acceptable to groups that are cults and false religions.

Christians are becoming less and less specific about what the Bible teaches. People who have attended worship and Sunday School for 25 years or more are experiencing greater difficulty remembering the stories of the Old and New Testament. The Biblical illiteracy of the non-Christian community is increasingly permeating the church itself. As a church, we do not know the Scriptures and therefore we do not really know God. The projection of this is anything but hopeful unless there is a dramatic change.

This is not to suggest that we face an unavoidable, dismal future. We do not. There must be a change in our values and style of living. We can turn this around if we are willing to learn the teaching of Scripture as opposed to denominational bias. We can change this scenario if the study of Scripture becomes one of our highest priorities. When we learn what the Scriptures teach, we will have the opportunity to know God better. We will also be able to teach the next generation to know the Scriptures and, in them, to discover who God is.

On a more positive note, there are small groups springing up in many places. They cross cultural, intellectual and economic lines as though they did not exist. The people of these groups are determined to discover what the Bible says to them and to their problems. Some are looking for a reason to live. Some are seeking to discover what the real shape of obedience is. But all of them are taking the Bible seriously. They are investing their time, money and energy in a no-nonsense approach to receiving God's word as revealed by the Holy Spirit.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

We prepared this study with that situation in mind. Inductive Bible study does not provide us with understandings that neatly fit denominational comfort zones. Inductive Bible study enables us to discover what the Bible teaches so that we can apply first-century inspiration to twenty-first century situations, no matter what our denominational identification may be. It is an attempt to enable Christian people to discover the teaching of the Scriptures for themselves. It grows out of a conviction that we, as Christians, can no longer depend upon professionals to tell us what the Bible teaches. We can study the Bible effectively for ourselves. If we are going to grow spiritually, we *must* do so.

Authors are not islands. They do not write in a vacuum, nor do they create all of their work within the confines of their own mind. We stretch one another's minds and understandings with insights which God places within the panorama of our vision. Out of intense personal study and ravenous reading, we make discoveries. Unfortunately, we are not always aware of the origin of some of our discoveries. Some gems of truth we can pinpoint, but others are the product of integrating the best scholarship of many colleagues. We must admit our debt of gratitude to many scholars and professors. They have focused the direction of our understanding of Scripture so that we can also share it with others. We can never repay our indebtedness, but we can faithfully share what we have gleaned with another generation of seekers. Where possible, we have identified our mentors, but often we are unable to express this gratitude to those who have made our understanding just that much clearer. For their wisdom, we give both them and God humble thanks.

O. William Cooper

Loveland, Colorado
May 24, 1992

LESSON 1 – THE BACKGROUND

The Identity of Luke

There is some debate about whether Luke was a Jew. Most scholars agree that "Luke" was a Gentile name. There are several possibilities concerning his origin:

1. He could have been a full Jew.
2. He could have been a full Gentile.
3. He could have had a Jewish mother and a Gentile father. (In cases where a person's lineage is half Jewish, half Gentile, the person was considered a Jew if the mother was Jewish.)
4. It is possible that Luke was a Jewish Christian under the following circumstances:

"...Those who strictly observe the ritual of Judaism, followed a Greek lifestyle and took a more relaxed approach to ritual observance." ¹

Ramsey, a twentieth century scholar, felt that Luke could have been "The man from Macedonia," whom Paul saw in his vision, in Acts 16:6-10.² That, of course, cannot be verified.

Someone has said,

"The chief argument for the view that Luke was a Jewish Christian rather than a Gentile is the author's intimate knowledge of the Old Testament." ³

Either Luke personally mastered the Old Testament and Jewish tradition, or else he was a Jewish Christian who brought with him an extensive knowledge of these things.

Herbert Lockyer reminds us of a possible origin of Luke's understandings:

"Tertullian said of this native of Antioch that he received his illumination from Paul." ⁴

One of 16 cities by that name, Antioch was located in a mountain valley not far from Tarsus, the birthplace of Paul. It was a luxurious city, the center of culture with a debauched social climate. This city of 500,000, called "the queen of the East", was a free city, and the third largest city in the Roman empire.⁵ There was a large Jewish population in the city. When Stephan was martyred, the Christians fled to Antioch. This is the first place where believers in Christ were called "Christians." It was a prosperous commercial center from which Christians sent famine relief to the Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30). We assume that this took place in approximately 45 A.D. The city was also the

¹ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Gen. Ed., The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume III, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988) p. 179.

² Geoffrey W. Bromiley, p. 179.

³ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, p. 179.

⁴ Herbert Lockyer, All The Men Of The Bible, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958) p.220.

⁵ Merrill Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957) p. 68,69.

origin of the dispute over whether to apply Jewish ritual law to the Gentile converts in the city.

The apostle Paul speaks of Titus, in II Corinthians 8:16 and in 12:18 also speaks of "the brother", (ton adelphon - τὸν ἀδελφόν). The appearance is that Paul was using "brother" as a way to identify a fellow Christian, but not to identify a relative. There are several scholars who believe that this "brother" was Luke.

Whatever his background, Luke probably was a man of some means. Wherever The New Testament mentions Luke there is no concern for his provision. He could spend what appears to be several years with Paul without noticeable financial concern. In Colossians 4:14, Paul speaks of "Luke the beloved Physician." This profession would make such financial independence possible. We know less about Luke than any other New Testament writer.

The Gospel of Luke

There is some debate about the authorship of the Gospel of Luke, but I am convinced that Luke wrote this beautiful account of the life of Christ.

There is an exactness in the document which belies the precision of his medical training and experience. This is a source of real help as we attempt to do a study of the book.

The salutation of the book, addressed to Theophilus, is an early hint that this is an account written for the benefit of the Gentile understanding.

The Gospel of Luke contains the most literary, the purest expression of the Greek language in the entire New Testament. Some would say it is the best written book in the world. Whatever one's stance, this is a use of the language of the highest order.

The Gospel of Luke contains some emphases which other Gospel records do not have. You will find a strong emphasis on prayer. This Gospel contains at least three parables about prayer, which the other Gospel records do not contain:

1. The friend at midnight, 11:5-8
2. The unjust judge, 18:1-8
3. The Pharisee and the Publican 18:9-14

Notice that there are at least 15 parables that appear in Luke which do not appear in either Matthew or Mark. This is vital to the message Luke is writing.

There is an emphasis on the teaching of Jesus in this Gospel, which was not as strongly described in the other Gospel records. In 21 of the 24 chapters of this Gospel, Luke portrays the teaching ministry of Jesus. Between the time of the Temptation, in chapter 4, and the Ascension, in chapter 24, Luke lists at least 81 separate instances of Jesus' teaching. This does not count the places where Luke said, "And he taught **daily** in the temple." On the other hand, Matthew's Gospel, though longer, records only 73 teaching experiences. In these situations, it is helpful to observe just what teaching situations both Luke and Matthew chose to report. This chart should prove helpful.

THE BACKGROUND

GOSPELS	DISCIPLES	RELIGIOUS LEADERS	CROWDS
LUKE	43%	31%	26%
MATTHEW	54%	25%	21%

Chart 1:1 - A Comparison of Matthew and Luke Concerning Jesus' Teaching

From this information, apparently Luke is focusing upon Jesus' teaching of the Disciples and less on the teaching of the crowds and religious leaders. The chart also makes it clear that Matthew had an even greater focus on Jesus' teaching of the disciples and considerably less on Jesus' teaching of the religious leaders and the crowds. This is not surprising. You are more apt to discover the thinking of Jesus from what He taught the disciples, where there was little opposition, than from His teaching of the religious leaders, where there was nearly total opposition.

Luke places a slightly greater emphasis on the healing ministry than Matthew does. In Luke, there are 18 specific instances of healing described. This does not include the places where it says, "many were brought to him and he healed them all." On the other hand, in Matthew there are 17 specific instances of healing described. The only surprise here is that there are not far more instances listed in Luke.

Though Luke's background was in medicine, that was not his purpose in writing the Gospel. He was trying to help Gentile people understand who Jesus was and what He had been doing. Note, however, that Luke displays a greater sensitivity to human, physical qualities than any of the other three Gospel writers. Again, this is not a source of surprise. If there is any surprise, it is that there is not far more of it.

As you read this Gospel record, you will notice that Luke is often less than specific about time and location of the different events. He was far more concerned about the content of the teaching than he was concerning the identification of the particular day on which it was taught or the specific location where Jesus was standing when He taught this great truth. The following passages illustrate this truth:

"One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret..." Luke 5:1

"One day Jesus was praying in a certain place..." Luke 11:1

The biographical material on the life of Jesus is far more complete in Luke than it is in either Matthew or Mark.⁶ This is particularly interesting in that Luke was not one of the original twelve disciples.

As you read the Gospel of Luke, note how vibrant and alive Luke presents Jesus. Jesus is a more understandable human being in Luke than in other writings. Luke presents Jesus as totally human, as struggling with the things that we share in our humanity. I trust that this study will be as inspirational for you as it has been for me.

⁶ Frank Charles Thompson, Ed., *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Zandervan Bible Publishers, 1983) p. 1533.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 2

Overview of The Gospel Of Luke

1. On the chart below, write a title of seven words or less for each chapter of Luke's Gospel.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
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19.	
20.	
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22.	
23.	
24.	

2. Study the chart you have made. See if you can find any major divisions; places where very different types of material are covered in the text.
3. Now look at the major divisions of the book that you discovered. See if you can break each of these divisions into smaller, meaningful subdivisions.
4. Look at your overview of the Gospel of Luke again. This time, see if you can divide the book in terms of the time designations used in the text.
5. When studying a historical book of the Bible, geography is a major consideration. Look at your overview of the Gospel of Luke again. Try to find the major divisions of the book in terms of the geographical information included in the text.
6. Scan the book of Luke again. See if you can find any information which helps you understand the author better than you have in the past.

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7. Using the information discovered in this overview, what conclusions can you draw about the Gospel of Luke?

LESSON 2 – AN OVERVIEW OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

1	The Birth of John the Baptist
2	The Birth of Jesus
3	The Baptism of Jesus
4	After Temptation, Jesus Taught and Healed
5	Jesus Called His Disciples
6	The Beatitudes
7	Jesus Healed - Centurion's Servant; Widow's Son
8	Jesus Teaches and Heals in Galilee
9	The Transfiguration
10	The Seventy are Sent to Witness
11	Woes on Pharisees and Lawyers
12	Jesus Teaches About Persecution
13	Jesus Teaches Parables of The Kingdom
14	Jesus Heals and Teaches in Pharisee's Home
15	Jesus Teaches Three Parables About Lostness
16	Jesus Teaches The Disciples
17	Jesus Heals and Teaches: Kingdom of God
18	Jesus Teaches; Healed Blind Man
19	Jesus' Triumphal Entry Into Jerusalem
20	Jesus Publicly Challenged by Scribes and Elders
21	Jesus Teaches the Destruction of Jerusalem and Temple
22	The Last Supper; Jesus' Arrest and Trial
23	The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus
24	The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus

Chart 2:1 - A chart of the titles of the chapters in the Gospel of Luke

Major Divisions of Luke's Gospel

As you study the Gospel of Luke, you will note that there are at least two natural divisions of the book:

1. 1:1-4:13 - The Early Life of Jesus
2. 4:14-24:53 - The Ministry of Jesus

If you look more closely at the content of the second division, there are at least three major parts to it. A more effective breakdown of the whole book might look like this:

1. 1:1-4:13	The Early Life of Jesus
2. 4:14-9:50	The Ministry of Jesus
3. 9:51-19:27	Jesus Moved Toward Jerusalem
4. 19:28-24:53	Jesus' Final Weeks in Jerusalem

Chart 2:2 The divisions of the Gospel of Luke

Time Considerations

Another effective way to consider the overview of a Biblical book is to carefully study the time indications. These may be somewhat specific. An indication of this is found in the opening chapter:

*Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.
Luke 1:56*

Another illustration is found in Luke's description of the Transfiguration of Jesus:

About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto the mountain to pray. Luke 9:28

On the other hand, there are a number of time designations that are extremely vague. This is exemplified in chapter five:

One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village in Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. Luke 5:17

Another citing of this vague time identification is found in this verse:

On one of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. Luke 6:12

Sometimes it is helpful to take a very general overview of a book in terms of the time designations that are mentioned or can be assumed.

1:1-4:13 covers the early life of Jesus. 4:14 is the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. Generally it is understood that the ministry of Jesus began at or about His thirtieth year.

Many scholars believe that Jesus was crucified when He was about 33 years of age. This means that 4:14-24:53 probably covered a span of about three and one half years. One can therefore observe that the author's emphasis focuses on the ministry of Jesus rather than His early life.

As we mentioned earlier, there are probably three major divisions in the material in 4:14-24:53. Look at what we feel we know about the timing of this period.

1. The entire segment lasts approximately three and one half years.
2. None of the three divisions is specific in its time designations.
3. It appears that 19:28-24:53 cover a period of four to six weeks.
4. This means that we can assume that 4:14-19:27 covered approximately thirty-four to thirty-five months.
5. The trip from Galilee, recorded in 9:50-19:27 probably did not cover more than six to eight months.
6. This would mean that the ministry of Jesus, 4:14-9:49, could have covered a period of approximately twenty-nine months.

Obviously, this is not very precise, but if it even approaches some degree of accuracy, the timing would look like this:

AN OVERVIEW OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

SEGMENT	SPACE COVERED IN BOOK	TIME INVOLVED
1:1 - 4:13	15.89%	30 years
4:14 - 9:50	23.84%	29 months
9:51 - 19:97	35.39%	6 months
19:28 - 24:53	24.88%	6 weeks

Chart 2:3 - A comparison of the amount of time involved in a segment of Luke with the portion of the book it covers.

From a proportional time standpoint, we will want to pay special attention to the fact that the emphasis of the author appears to focus on the last seven or eight months of Jesus' life, 9:51-24:53. We will refer to this again as we come to the individual segments.

Again, from a proportional time consideration, the author focuses more space on the last six weeks than on the rest. This will be an important consideration as we come to each of these divisions in our study.

Geography

Geography is also an important consideration when you do an overview of the whole book to see where the author places his emphasis. Notice the number of places listed in each of the four major divisions of the book.

DIVISION	SPACE COVERED IN LUKE	PLACES MENTIONED
1:1 - 4:13	15.89%	10 = 16.13%
4:14 - 9:50	23.84%	13 = 20.97%
9:5 - 19:27	35.39%	13 = 20.97%
19:28-24:53	24.88%	26 = 41.93%

Chart 2:4 - A comparison of the space covered in a division of the book with places mentioned

This demonstrates that from a geographical standpoint, the emphasis is on the final division, 19:28-24:53. Doing a geographic overview, a number of facts became evident:

1. Geography was not critically important to what Luke was doing in several parts of the book.
2. Notice that the book begins and ends in Jerusalem.
3. Very little attention is given to the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus such as you will find in the Gospel of John.
4. In 9:51-19:27 - the events and teachings were far more significant than the location.
5. In 19:28-24:53 there were 26 specific locations identified.

Suddenly the identification of locations is vital to the record. It should be noted that in this segment there is little teaching by Jesus, whereas in 9:50-19:27 there are few places identified, but it is almost totally a record of Jesus' teachings. These observations are not conclusive in themselves, but they do help us form opinions concerning the text. These observations will be referred to again as we come to our study of each of the divisions.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

One of the unique features of the Gospel of Luke is his sensitivity to the person and character of Jesus. One of the ways that this is most carefully expressed is in the teaching that Jesus did during His ministry. As we come to that segment of the book, we will try to be as sensitive to Luke's insights as possible.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 3

LUKE 1:1-80

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

1. There are ten paragraphs in Luke chapter one. On the chart below, please give each paragraph a title of seven words or less.

1: 1- 4	
1: 5- 7	
1: 8-23	
1:24-25	
1:26-38	
1:39-55	
1:56	
1:57-66	
1:67-79	
1:80	

2. The introduction to Luke's Gospel is unlike any of the other three Gospel records. As you read this paragraph, 1:1-4, what reasons can you find for Luke's writing the Gospel?
 - a. Read the paragraph several times. Make a list of as many observations as you can from the text. Now study the list. What did you learn?
 - b. We think Luke was not present at all the events reported in the Gospel. What does this paragraph tell us about his preparation to write such a book?
3. Read Luke 1:5-7 carefully.
 - a. Now reflect on Luke 1:5-7. This paragraph deals with childlessness. What reason can you find for the fact that there is a strong emphasis on the spiritual life of Zechariah and Elizabeth?
 - b. In Luke 1:5, the author tells us that "Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron." What does this add to the story?
 - c. Reflect on Luke 1:7 again. List the pieces of information you find there. Identify the things that this would mean to people in that culture, especially a priest.
4. Put yourself in Zechariah's place. Now read 1:8-23 again.
 - a. If this experience happened to you, how would you feel?
 - b. Review again Zechariah's loss of speech. What can you discover about the reason Zechariah lost his ability to speak?
 - c. What is added to the story by the information about the people waiting for Zechariah to emerge from the Holy Place (Luke 1:21, 22)?

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- d. Look again at the information the angel gave Zechariah concerning his son. What has the angel told Zechariah about the baby?
5. In Luke 1:24, 25, the author describes Elizabeth's response to her discovery of her pregnancy.
 - a. What does her response tell you about what life had been like for her through most of her married life?
 - b. What did Elizabeth say about God in relation to this event?
6. The paragraph, 1:26 - 38 is a picture of Mary's response to the angelic announcement regarding Jesus' birth.
 - a. Think for a moment about the way the angel greeted Mary. What did you learn from these verses?
 - b. In 1:29-33, the angel told Mary what her baby would be like. What information did the angel give to Mary?
 - c. In 1:34 Mary is puzzled and questions the angel. Put yourself in her situation. How would you feel if you heard this announcement?
 - d. In Luke 1:35-37, the angel describes Mary's conception and informs her of Elizabeth's pregnancy. What did the angel accomplish by telling Mary both announcements simultaneously?
 - e. Reflect on Mary's response to the angel in 1:38. What does this response tell you about Mary? What does this response tell you about God?
7. In Luke 1:39-55, the author describes Mary's visit with Elizabeth.
 - a. In Luke 1:39-45, the author describes the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth. What is the importance of the information Luke includes in this part of the paragraph?
 - b. Reread Mary's song, Luke 1:46-55. What does this song tell you about Mary's understanding of God?
 - c. There is a concern, among some, that Mary is expressing her pride, in Luke 1:48b, 49a. What information can you find about Mary's image of herself in the text?
8. Luke describes the birth and naming of John the Baptist in Luke 1:57-66.
 - a. In Luke 1:58 the author tells us that friends and neighbors rejoiced with Elizabeth over the birth of John. Why would this be important?
 - b. What reason can you find for the problems encountered over the naming of the baby? Is there any real connection between Zechariah's insistence that the baby's name is John and the immediate reception of his ability to speak again?
9. Chapter one has been called the "choir section" because of the three major songs included in it.
 - a. In Luke 1:68-75 Zechariah, prophesying under the power of the Holy Spirit, tells some exciting things about the Messiah. List the pieces of information that the Holy Spirit gave through the song of Zechariah.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 3

- b. There is a definite relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist that is described in this song. Describe that relationship. What does Zechariah say about it?
 - c. Think about what Zechariah said about his own son in the song. What does that tell you about Zechariah?
10. Luke 1:80, though it is a single sentence, is the final paragraph of the chapter. Think carefully about the sentence. What does it tell us about John the Baptist?

LESSON 3 – LUKE 1:1-80

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

There are ten paragraphs in the first chapter of Luke's Gospel. They are as follows:

1:1-4	Reason for Writing Luke
1:5-7	Zechariah and Elizabeth Childless
1:8-23	Angel Announces Birth of John The Baptist
1:24-25	Elizabeth Conceived
1:26-38	Annunciation of Jesus' Birth
1:39-55	The Magnificat - Mary's Song
1:56	Mary Visits Elizabeth Three Months
1:57-66	Birth and Naming of John The Baptist
1:67-79	Prophecy of Zechariah - Benedictus
1:80	John Spends Early Life in Desert

We will consider each of these paragraphs in detail.

Luke 1:1-4 - The Reason For Writing This Gospel

This first paragraph identifies the name of the person to whom Luke was writing. His name was Theophilus. The name means "friend of God."¹ This fact has led some people to conjecture that the person's name was not Theophilus, but that it was a way for Luke to refer to a man who was sympathetic to the Christian cause without identifying him by name. We can not be sure, but I tend to think it was a person's proper name. In Luke 1:3, Luke speaks of him as "most excellent Theophilus." This is important because Luke used this designation for other people in his writings. Twice, in the book of Acts, Luke quotes people who referred to the Procurator Felix as "most excellent", (23:26; 24:3). In Acts 26:25, Luke quotes the speech of Paul in which he referred to Festus, the successor to Felix, as "most excellent." It appears that this term was used to describe people of highest rank. It may be what the people of Great Britain mean when they speak of "her majesty." This may suggest that Theophilus was a high-ranking Roman official. There is little doubt that he was a Roman citizen. There is very good reason to believe that he came from Antioch.

It comes as a surprise to some people that there were more than four accounts of the life of Jesus. Luke states clearly that there were "many." This is understandable when you think of what Jesus meant to those who had followed Him. Luke speaks of this as "an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us." Christians, from the very first, have felt that not only Jesus' birth, but His whole life was a fulfillment of the announcements of the prophets of old.

Notice the way Luke describes the way he gained access to this information:

¹ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Gen. Ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Volume IV, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988) p. 831.

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Just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Luke 1:2

From this statement, it is obvious that Luke did not claim to have been with Jesus and the disciples during the time of Jesus' ministry. It is fair to assume that Luke was either tutored by an eye-witness or had access to one or more of the many accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus. Many scholars believe that this means that both Luke and Matthew used Mark's Gospel as a basis upon which to write their accounts. There is no way to be certain. Luke did spend at least two years with Paul, and a number of other Christian leaders, during the Apostle's incarceration either in Rome or in Caesarea.² It is very possible that he gained the necessary information at this time.

Luke describes his preparation for this presentation.

Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you... Luke 1:3

Luke speaks of his preparation as an investigation, The word is "paraekolouthaekoti", "παρηκολουθηκότι" which means to follow very closely or beside, to trace the course of the facts with extreme care.³ He has done everything possible to confirm the accuracy of the information and is now going to present it in an orderly fashion.

Just what is an "orderly account"? The word Luke used was "kathedzaes" "καθεξῆς" which is usually translated "consecutively." This does not necessarily mean chronologically. It may mean consecutively according to a theme that Luke is following. It also may mean consecutively according to a purpose he has chosen to pursue. We know that there are a few chronological differences between Luke and the other two synoptic Gospels - Mark and Matthew. Most scholars have an opinion concerning this issue, but none of these can be stated without question.

In this paragraph, Luke boldly announces his purpose for the writing of this book. He wrote:

It seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, So that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. Luke 1:4

There are several conjectures concerning what Luke means by "the things you have been taught." Does Luke mean that Theophilus was a Christian? Does it mean that Theophilus had been taught the factual material concerning the Christian faith, but had not accepted it as yet? Could it be that it means that Theophilus is a new Christian and Luke, by this letter, is confirming the accuracy of the things that he had been taught? We do not know, at this point.

² George A. Hadjiahtoniou, *New Testament Introduction*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957) p. 131.

³ John R. Kohlenberger III, Ed., *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984) p. 440.

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1:5-7 - Zechariah and Elizabeth Are Childless

Luke's formal record of the life of Jesus begins with the background of John the Baptist. Luke identifies the time as during the reign of Herod, King of Judea. There were at least six men in the family called Herod, but only five of them were rulers:

1. Herod the Great - King of whole area - 37 B.C. - 4 A.D.
2. Herod Philip II - Tetrarch of Ilurea - 4 B.C. - 34 A.D.
4. Herod Philip I - He did not rule - He died in 34 A.D.
5. Herod Agrippa I - King of Judea - 37 - 44 A.D.
6. Herod Agrippa II - King of Judea - 53 - 70 A.D.

Luke referred to the paternal ruler of the family, Herod the Great. Luke is identifying the general time frame in which this took place (37 B.C. - 4 A.D.) It is under Roman rule, not Jewish.

Luke gives further information in this verse:

...There was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron.

Luke 1:5

The name Zechariah means "Jehovah remembers." Already in the time of Solomon the families of the two sons of Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar, were divided into 24 divisions. Each division served at the altar for a week twice a year plus the special times of the year. Zechariah was a priest after the division of Abijah which was the last group in the family of Ithamar, the younger of Aaron's sons. This would place him at the very bottom of the priestly family in terms of importance.

Each priest was permitted to offer incense at the daily sacrifice only once in his lifetime. This was because there were so many priests. It was apparently at this time of great honor and privilege that God gave the message to Zechariah.

Notice how Luke identifies Zechariah's wife:

His wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Luke 1:5

This provides us with several pieces of information:

1. John the Baptist, on both sides of his family, came from a priestly family. These are great credentials to say the least.
2. If Elizabeth is a descendant of Aaron and Mary is her cousin, then, depending on which parent comes from the Aaronic line, it is possible that Mary comes from both the lineage of David and of Aaron.
3. If that were the case, then Jesus would represent, through the lineage of Mary, a heritage of both the kingly and priestly ancestry.

Luke also gives some information about the spiritual condition of Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth.

Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. Luke 1:6

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The word "upright" is "dikaiousunae" "δικαιοσύνη" which means righteous. It stands for the character or quality of being right or just in relation to God and others. It is that which is pleasing to God.⁴ Luke takes special care to report that it was not just Zechariah, the priest, who was deeply committed to justice and righteousness, but his wife Elizabeth as well. The priest was expected to be just and righteous. The wife had no more investment in these qualities than any other person in Israel. Elizabeth was just and righteous out of intense desire, not necessity. What a combination they must have been!

Luke goes on to say that they were both blameless in relationship to all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. Literally, the word for "blameless" is "amemptos", "αμemptos" It means to be without blame. They lived their lives in such a way that no one could accuse them of any wrongdoing concerning both the law and ordinances of Israel. Luke is describing two people who were unusual in their longing to be holy before God.

Luke 1:7 sounds like a casual remark; an afterthought. It was not. It was Luke's medical thoroughness expressing itself. Notice what Luke said:

But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years. Luke 1:7

There are three pieces of information in this sentence:

1. Zechariah and Elizabeth were childless.
2. Elizabeth could not conceive a child.
3. They were now beyond child-bearing age.

This would not be a great tragedy in our culture, but it was social suicide in Palestine. People understood this to mean that the couple were guilty of some horrendous sin and God used this means to punish them. Women of the community would probably have little to do with Elizabeth and the men of the community would shun Zechariah in fear that they too might be treated with the same punishment. This was doubly tragic for a priest, one whose profession required that he be holy and without blame. In effect Luke was saying that the goodness and obedience of Zechariah and Elizabeth were not due to the fact that life had been a bed of roses for the two of them. In spite of the devastating conditions in which they lived their lives, this couple chose to live lives that were righteous and blameless.

1:8-23 - Angel Announces The Birth Of John The Baptist

Some people understand that Zechariah was simply performing his daily duty at the altar when this startling experience came to him. That is not the case. Notice how Luke describes it:

*Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.
Luke 1:8, 9*

⁴ John R. Kohlenberger III, Ed., p. 970.

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There were so many priests that a schedule was worked out that allowed each priest to serve at this altar once during his entire priesthood. It was on this very special day of honor that Zechariah was serving at the altar.

As Zechariah performed his duty, Luke tells us, all the people were in the outer court praying at the time when incense was to be burned. Incense was a symbol of prayer and the very devout saw this as a time to come and petition God for the deep needs of their lives. This was a very special time in for the faithful Jew.

Verses 11 and 12 set the stage for the shocking experience which came to Zechariah. He was standing at the Altar of Incense preparing to exercise his great privilege of burning incense before the veil of the Holy of Holies.

Notice that Luke indicates that the angel stood on the "right side of the altar of incense." There is no clarifying evidence in Scripture, but we assume that the angel would be standing on the right side of the Altar of Incense as viewed from the east entrance to the Holy Place. If this is true, then Zechariah would have been standing on the east side of the Altar of Incense and the angel would be standing on the north side.

Verse 12 describes the response of Zechariah to this discovery. Luke wrote,

When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.
Luke 1:12

The word "startled" literally means "to terrify; to destabilize by means of intense anxiety." On the other hand, the phrase "gripped with fear" should more literally be translated "fear fell upon them." This fear is a military term which describes what happens when a soldier is frightened and flees for his life. It is one of the most devastating forms of fear.

Verses 13 through 17 report the message of the angel to Zechariah:

But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous - to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Luke 1:13-17

The angel tried to calm Zechariah. God and His special servants repeatedly seek to calm the fears of people. It is characteristic of His nature. Luke does not explain what prayer Zechariah had offered to God. Was he praying for a son? Was he expressing the deep concern for Israel that his position required of him? We can not speak authoritatively on this subject. Notice, however, the way the angel continues to speak to Zechariah.

Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. Luke 1:13

The fact that this announcement immediately follows the angel's promise that Zechariah's prayer had been heard causes one to wonder whether or not that was the intent of his prayer. I am sure that if I had been mistreated for decades because we had no children, if

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people looked upon my childlessness as an evidence of sin in my life as a priest, and we were now at an age where childbearing was out of the question, I know I would be praying intensely about that situation.

The promise of a son was immediately followed by an announcement of the name. One of the great joys of a father was the opportunity to name his son. Zechariah did not have that opportunity. The angel informed him the name of the child must be "John." This name means "Jehovah is gracious." It is most fitting for such an outstanding servant of God.

Verses 14 and 15 give a description of the life John would live. The angel said:

He will be a joy and delight to you and many will rejoice because of his birth... Luke 1:14

People tend to think of this promise in terms of the immediate family. Certainly the whole family would rejoice when it was discovered that this childless couple were finally going to have a baby. That, however, was not the intent of the angelic message. The angel was referring to the effect of John's life upon people outside the family. A more literal translation of the verse might be, "And he shall be joy and great exaltation to you and many will rejoice over the birth of him." The emphasis is twofold:

1. His birth will bring great joy to the parents. This joy has two sources:
 - a. The joy of a childless couple finally having a child.
 - b. The awareness of what his birth will mean to his priest father.
2. Others will rejoice because of what his ministry will mean in their lives.

The angelic message was daring and exciting to say the least.

For he will be great in the sight of the Lord. Luke 1:15a

What does that mean? Was this identification given to anyone else in Scripture? The Greek language uses at least nine different words to distinguish different levels of greatness. This particular word is used symbolically to indicate physical size, circumstance or rank. In this instance, it appears that the angel was saying that John would hold a unique position or rank in the sight of God. From a human perspective, people would receive such a designation because of the position they held rather than the quality of their life. With God, however, the quality of the life is far more important than the position one holds. To the best of our knowledge, no one else received such a designation.

Before we continue interpreting this paragraph, I would like to point out one of the structural features that are found here. These structural situations do not appear in the translation we are using, but they are present in the Greek text. Verses 15 and 16 describe the personal qualities of John while verse 17 describes the effect of John's life on the people with whom he comes in contact. There is one thing that the two portions of the paragraph have in common: both tie several phrases together by the word "and." Let me put this in diagram form to help make this very clear.

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He will be great in the sight of the Lord
and
He is never to take wine or other fermented drink
and
He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.
and
many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God
and
He will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the
hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of
the righteous.

The word "and" ties words and phrases together that are of equal importance. It is important to note that John will be great in the sight of the Lord, but it will also be essential that he does not use strong drink.

Some have felt that the angel's instruction that John should not use wine or strong drink suggests that he was a Nazirite. That may be true. It also should be remembered that a priest was not permitted to drink wine or strong drink when he was about to serve at the altar. It is possible that this is a hint concerning John's priestly function rather than an identification of the fact that he was a Nazirite. We cannot be sure.

The angel also told Zechariah that his son would be filled with the Holy Spirit from the time of his birth. This filling with the Holy Spirit is not so much an emotional experience as it is a preparation for service. John has been set apart for this important ministry not just from the time that he, as a member of the priestly family, takes his place at the altar, but was set apart for it from the time of his birth.

Verse seventeen contains several vivid pictures which Zechariah would understand fully. Look at the pictures the angel suggested to Zechariah:

And he will go on before the Lord... Luke 1:17

This word picture had specific meaning for the Jews of that day. This was the picture of a herald who went out ahead when the king was travelling. The herald would precede the king and announce his coming. In some instances the heralds sounded trumpets to announce the approach of the king. The angel was saying that as the herald was to the king, so John would be to the coming of Jesus.

The angel also said,

...in the spirit and power of Elijah... Luke 1:17

This image suggested two things to Zechariah:

1. Elijah was a powerful prophet who faithfully pronounced the word of the Lord, even at great risk. John was to be such a prophet.
2. The words of the angel, concerning Elijah, are couched in the language of the prophet Malachi.

The prophet Malachi said:

See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger

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*of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty.
Malachi 3:1*

It is clear that Malachi is giving a prophetic word about the coming of the Messiah. In so doing, Malachi speaks also of a "messenger" of Jehovah who will prepare the way for the Messiah. The angel spoke to Zechariah in terms that would identify John with that "messenger."

Malachi also said:

"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse." Malachi 4:5, 6

This makes it clear that the angel is quoting from the prophetic word of Malachi. This piece of information would not escape Zechariah. It would be clear to him that the angel was making an astonishing pronouncement. Though he had long been childless, now the angel was not only telling him that he would have a son in his old age, but that this son would be the one who would be the herald of their Messiah. What a blessing!

The angel's words "and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous" do not come from Malachi. These words suggest the natural result when children's hearts are turned to their father and the father's heart is turned to his children.

The angel concludes the announcement with an interesting statement.

...To make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Luke 1:17

Another way to translate this clause might be "To prepare (like laying a foundation) a people who are intensely prepared (ready) for the Lord." That is precisely what John the Baptist did.

Luke records the shocked response of Zechariah to the angel:

..."how can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." Luke 1:18

Notice that Zechariah did not question the angel about how it could be that his son could be the herald of the Messiah. That was believable. The thing that he struggled to believe was that at his age, he and his wife would have a son. That is understandable. If you have longed for a son as long as he had and absorbed as much humiliation over it as he had, hearing that you would have a child would be the ultimate miracle.

The angel's answer to Zechariah gives information about the question Zechariah asked, but also gives us a glimpse of how God deals with His people.

*The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."
Luke 1:19, 20*

The angel begins his words of assurance by giving his credentials. Gabriel was very important to the people of Israel. Just the mention of his name filled them with awe. When he indicated that he stood in the presence of God, he was giving the highest possible

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credentials. They thought of this as getting as close as it was possible to Jehovah, their God. Further, Gabriel indicated that he had been sent on a special mission to speak to Zechariah. Though this man was a priest, he was not on anyone's list of the ten most prominent men in Israel. He was one of the lowest members of the lowliest families in the priesthood. It would be hard to be a more obscure priest than Zechariah was. Gabriel was sent specifically to give Zechariah good news. The angel left no doubt that Zechariah had been uniquely honored by this message from God.

Verse 20 takes a different turn completely. Notice what the angel said,

And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time. Luke 1:20

There seems to be a hint of judgment in the angel's words. Certainly there is a cause and effect relationship between Zechariah's failure to believe and his inability to speak which will last for the entire time of Elizabeth's pregnancy and until the child is named. I believe we must acknowledge this fact. On the other hand, there is also an affirming note in the way that God dealt with him. This was not an angry judgment which struck Zechariah speechless for the rest of his life. It was justice that lasted precisely as long as the pregnancy of Zechariah's wife and until the baby was given a name. In effect, this justice became an affirmation to Zechariah that what he had heard was real and could be trusted.

Verses 21 and 22 are somewhat of a flashback. While Zechariah and the angel were talking, the people, apparently friends and family who gathered for this momentous event, were waiting. Luke describes it this way:

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. Luke 1:21

If you read Luke 1:11-20, the account of the visit of the angel, it takes only a minute or two. It is clear, from verse 21, that this conversation covered a long period of time. It caused those who were there to celebrate with Zechariah to wonder just what had happened to him while he was in the temple. The opportunity to offer incense in the Holy Place was a great privilege, but it was awe inspiring as well. It is not surprising that the people became concerned when Zechariah did not emerge in the usual amount of time. Notice the contrast. Zechariah was receiving a fantastic announcement from God while his friends were becoming worried and concerned about his welfare inside the temple.

In verse 22 Luke describes how Zechariah and his friends met and how it all worked out.

When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak. Luke 1:22

Think for a moment about this encounter. When Zechariah went into the temple he could speak. Now he emerges belatedly and he is unable to tell them what has happened and they are quite concerned. In apparent frustration he tried to explain to them what had happened by making signs. The best that he was able to do was to get them to understand that he had had a vision while at the altar. Nevertheless, he remained unable to speak.

Luke then describes a situation that most Jews would understand. He said,

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When his time of service was completed, he returned home. Luke 1:23

The duties of the priest were unlike the responsibilities of a modern pastor. There were several reasons why the priests worked on a rotation system. They did not live in Jerusalem, but in several communities which were several miles from the city. It would have been impossible for them to commute daily to serve at the temple. There were also so many priests that they had to have a rotation in order to allow each priest to serve for a brief period before going home to be with his family. This fact was well known by all the people of Israel, but not necessarily known by people outside the land.

1:24-25 - Elizabeth Conceived

Luke describes the fulfillment of the promise by the angel.

After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. Luke 1:24

It sounds as though Elizabeth remained in seclusion for only five months. Actually, it was not uncommon for an expectant mother to remain in seclusion during the entire nine months of her pregnancy. It appears that Luke is telling us that after five months of her seclusion something else happened. This is a bit difficult for modern readers to understand. In our culture there is almost no seclusion at all. Imagine the shock Elizabeth would have felt if she had seen a woman with a large tee shirt with the word "baby" and an arrow pointing to the baby.

Elizabeth's rejoicing is to be expected. Notice what she said.

"The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people." Luke 1:25

There are volumes of emotion wrapped up in these few words. There are three parts to Elizabeth's comment:

1. God has made this pregnancy possible.
2. After years of apparent disfavor of God, now she felt she was experiencing the favor of God.
It was a common understanding that if a couple were childless that they probably had sinned grievously and God was withholding His favor from them because of their evil deeds. Now Elizabeth had reason to affirm that the favor of God was with her.
3. She had experienced brutal disgrace at the hands of the people, especially from the wives of the other priests, because she was childless.

Her barrenness was, to them, a symbol of her evil ways, but she was expected to be holy and righteous because her husband was a priest of God. Every barren woman was disgraced and maligned by all the people. The barren wife of a priest would be subjected to even greater abuse. The simple statement of Elizabeth was a classic understatement of the tragedy of her life.

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1:26-38 - The Annunciation Of Jesus' Birth

In this paragraph there are five individual parts:

1:26-28 - The angel Gabriel greets Mary

1:29-33 - The angel describes Jesus' life

1:34 - Mary quizzes the angel

1:35-37 - Angel announces Elizabeth's pregnancy

1:38 - Mary submits self to God

Each part is unique, but all are part of the annunciation story. Each of the parts must be interpreted in that light.

1:26-28 - The angel Gabriel greets Mary

Luke continues with the story by tying this segment to the five-month seclusion which Elizabeth observed. In the sixth month, God sent an angel -- Gabriel -- to Nazareth. Verse 27 gives some critical information:

...to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. Luke 1:27

For decades there has been a continuing debate about the meaning of the word "virgin." The word "virgin" (Parthenos, παρθένοσ in Greek) is used twice in verse 27, but it does not appear in the Greek text in verse 34. The wording there might better be "since I know not a man." The word "παρθένοσ" is usually used to describe a mature young lady who has had no sexual experience whatsoever. Whatever a person thinks about this word, the context of this paragraph clearly describes an unmarried, sexually inexperienced young woman.

Mary is pledged, espoused in marriage to Joseph. The pledge or espousal of a young woman was taken seriously in that time. If the groom died before the wedding, the espoused bride was considered a widow. The couple were considered married in most every way except sexual relations.

Luke identifies Joseph as a descendant of David. Luke does not offer any proof of this assertion. He simply states that Joseph was part of the lineage of David. This is very important because the Scriptures are clear that the Messiah would come from the lineage of this royal family.

We know very little about Joseph. The assumptions and traditions which surround his name are numerous. In most instances these do not represent dependable evidence.

In verse 28, Luke tells of the beginning of the conversation between Mary and the angel Gabriel.

*The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored!
The Lord is with you." Luke 1:28*

A more literal translation of the text might be, "Hail (rejoice), one on whom grace is bestowed, the Lord is with you." Some sources add the words, "Blessed are you among women." None of the major Greek texts include these words. The word "greeting" "Chairo," "χαίρω" means to rejoice, but was often used as a greeting. Having extended the greeting, the angel made two assertions:

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1. "You are highly favored."

One might say it another way, "you are the recipient of great grace." The angel was indicating that the coming events would be evidence of the fact that she was the recipient of unusual grace from God.

2. "The Lord is with you."

On another occasion the angel of the Lord said to Gideon,

"The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." Judges 6:11

This salutation was a source of great fear and frustration to Gideon and a source of troubling to Mary. It is a way of stressing the idea that in the midst of severe trials, God shares the dilemma with us; He goes through the deep water at our side.

Put yourself into Mary's situation. She was from a poor obscure family. No one knew the men of her family much less the women. Mary might well have responded to this greeting as Gideon did. She could have said, If I am highly favored and if the Lord is with me, then why are we so poor and obscure in all Israel?

The bases for her confusion and fear are obvious. She had no experience to corroborate what the angel was saying to her. The more he said, the more confusing it became.

The second section of this paragraph, Luke 1:29-33, records a dialogue between Mary and the angel Gabriel.

Luke describes for us, in verse 29, the way Mary responded to this announcement. He said:

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. Luke 1:29

The greeting "hail" or "rejoice" was not uncommon. The thing that troubled Mary was that the angel said that she was highly favored and that the Lord was with her. People from the poor and unnoticed parts of a Jewish tribe had difficulty believing that the Lord was with them.

The angel did not deal directly with the dilemma with which Mary was struggling. The angel said,

...Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. Luke 1:30

The word "afraid", in the Greek text, is "Phobos", "φόβος" from which we get our word *phobia*. It is a military term that describes the situation when a soldier is so frightened for his own safety that he defies his orders and flees for his life. The words "highly favored", in verse 28 and "found favor", in verse 30, both come from "caris" "Χάρις," the root word for *grace*.

In verse 31, the angel continued to shock Mary by announcing that she was going to give birth to a son whose name would be Jesus. The shock of this announcement was almost more than Mary could bear. This was a culture in which the moral code absolutely forbade any form of promiscuous activity. Mary was not married yet and was not planning to be for the balance of the year. She could not imagine herself in such circumstances.

The angel's command that she should name the boy "Jesus" would not be so great a shock to Mary. There were many Jewish boys who would receive the name Jeshua, a

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form of Joshua, which means "Jehovah is Savior." It seems certain that Mary and Joseph would talk about this fact because the angel had given Joseph the same command.

One of the most shocking things the angel said was,

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. Luke 1:32

There can be no doubt in our minds that this is an indication that the angel is saying that Jesus would be the Son of God. How is a very young Jewish girl to understand such an announcement? How could she possibly be the mother of a king? How could she be the mother of God's child? She did not have a husband, nor was she among those of highest station in the tribe of Judah. How could this possibly make sense to her? Nevertheless, this is what the angel said.

The name "Most High" is the Hebrew name for God "Elyon." This name points to the overwhelming majesty of God. God is supreme, a place of protection, a hiding place from the devastation of life. God is omnipotent. Jesus would be identified as the Son of the Omnipotent God. It seems impossible for Mary to miss the idea that the angel is telling her that her baby would be the Messiah of Israel, the Son of the God of Israel.

The next phrase, of the angel's announcement, had to be just as confusing to Mary.

*And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David...
Luke 1:32*

Granted, Mary was of the tribe of Judah, from which the king was to come, but her family was one of the poorest and least likely families of the whole tribe. Add to this the fact that Israel was now under the power of Rome and there was no hope that that situation would change soon. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the angel was announcing that the baby she was to bear was also to be the king of Israel. This had to be a mixed blessing to Mary. Every Jewish girl dreamed that her baby might be the Messiah of Israel. The other side of this situation would not be quite as exciting. If she were to have a baby and no husband, she knew that she would be subjected to humiliation and abuse from her neighbors. No one would believe her innocence. Everyone would believe the worst possible things about her morals. She would be treated like a prostitute and scorned by her family, Joseph's family and all their friends.

The next phrase of the angel's announcement had to be even more confusing than the previous ones. Notice what the angel said,

*And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom
there shall be no end. Luke 1:33*

If it was confusing to hear that her baby would be called the Son of the Most High God, think what it would be like to hear that her baby would reign over the House of Jacob forever. Every king of Israel had had a termination date for his reign. The angel was saying to Mary that her baby would not reign over Israel for just a few short years, but that His reign would be endless. Physically speaking, that seemed impossible.

In the beginning of the third section of this paragraph, 1:34, Mary either pushed most of the announcement aside or did not hear it. She, instead, focused upon the most difficult thing for her to understand. She was a virgin, she had no plans of being married immediately and yet the angel said she would have a baby. Notice her words.

How shall this be, seeing I know not a man. Luke 1:34

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Mary was a virgin and it is clear from her words that she intended to stay that way until her marriage, which was apparently some time away. The confusion of her heart was immense. There is no unwillingness to bear the child, just confusion over how this would be accomplished for a young woman in her situation.

In the fourth section of the paragraph, 1:35-37, Luke's report of the angel's response is most delicately described.

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God..." Luke 1:35

The angel made it clear that this conception was brought about by the Spirit of God and not by a man. This was a display of the power of the omnipotent God and not the sexual activity of another human being. The angel also indicated again, in clearer terms, that this baby would be divine; the Son of God. This is another very clear statement that her baby would be the Messiah of her people, Israel.

The angel continued with his announcement.

Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. Luke 1:36

As if it were not enough to discover that she was going to give birth to the Son of God before she was married, Mary now discovers that her aged, barren cousin, Elizabeth, was going to have a baby also. This seemed as impossible for Mary to accept as the announcement to Sarah had been in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, this was the angel's message. The angel's announcement that this was the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy makes it clear that this was not just a possibility; it could be definitely confirmed. This seems to be the import of the angel's next statement:

For no word from God shall be void of power. Luke 1:37

It is one thing to make a pronouncement, it is another to bring it to pass. The angel was saying that this was more than just a statement. Because God said it, they could depend upon it. It was an invitation for Mary to check it out for herself.

In the fifth and final segment of the paragraph, the entire experience had to be mind-boggling for Mary. Everything the angel said stretched Mary's faith to the breaking point. Nevertheless, notice how she responded:

And Mary said, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." And the angel departed from her. Luke 1:38

Fully aware of the consequences of her commitment, Mary considered herself the bond-servant of God and offered herself for this frightening service to Him. Abraham's willingness to offer his son Isaac was no more demanding a sacrifice than was Mary's commitment to be God's bond-servant in the birth of His son. The verse concludes with even more frightening words. The angel departed. When the presence of God feels so close and real, it is not as difficult to make the total commitment. There always comes that time when it appears that God is gone and we face the real world alone. That was the precise situation for Mary. The angel left, but she still had to face the family and friends in a situation that she could not even hope to successfully explain.

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1:39-55 - The Magnificat - Mary's Song

There are two major thrusts in this paragraph:

1. 1:39-45 - Mary's visit to Elizabeth
2. 1:46-55 - Mary's song

Luke's account of Mary's visit is brief. Notice his words:

*At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judah, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.
Luke 1:39,40*

There is a void in these verses. It sounds as though Mary just left on a trip to the Jerusalem area to visit Elizabeth. That could not possibly be what Luke intended for us to understand. The trip from Nazareth to the priestly villages near Jerusalem was at least a five day walk. An unmarried young woman would never be allowed to go alone on such a long trip. We do not know how this trip was accomplished. We can be quite certain that she did not travel alone as it appears in the text. The author gives the impression that Mary was in a hurry to arrive at her cousin's home.

The greeting between Mary and Elizabeth was appropriate for that culture. Verse 41 is an interesting part of the text. Notice Luke's report:

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Luke 1:41

Notice that Elizabeth identified the greeting of Mary, but it was the baby that responded by leaping within the womb. This suggests that there was prenatal cognizance by the unborn prophet, John the Baptist. It is a forerunner of a situation which would take place when Jesus arrived while John was preaching along the Jordan River.

Some would wonder just why the text identifies the fact that at the same time Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit the child leaped within her womb. In many instances, the filling with the Holy Spirit was given for a specific task of ministry that was certainly the situation in this instance. Notice that immediately following the filling with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth made an announcement of prophetic proportions. The leaping of the unborn child and the filling with the Holy Spirit were prelude to Elizabeth's announcement that Mary's child would be the Messiah.

in a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear." Luke 1:42

This announcement, made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, prophesies that Mary will bear a child even before Mary has an opportunity to share the news with her cousin Elizabeth. This is the second confirmation:

1. The announcement by the angel
2. The announcement by Elizabeth

Elizabeth had not finished her announcement. She continued in these words:

*But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my*

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womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished! Luke 1:43-45

It is certain that Elizabeth was much older than Mary and should have received adulation from her. Just the reverse happened. Elizabeth gave honor to the younger relative. The reason was not that Elizabeth did not know their customs, but that the baby Mary was to bear was to be the Messiah, the Savior of Israel.

Elizabeth identified the nature of her unborn baby's response. It was a leap for joy. It is as though the unborn child realized just how momentous the occasion was and rejoiced in the presence of His Lord's mother.

Again, without time to be filled in on the events that had taken place when the angel spoke to Mary, Elizabeth mentions the experience, especially one outstanding detail. Elizabeth identified the fact that when the angel informed Mary that she would bear the Messiah, even though she did not yet have a husband, Mary believed what the angel had said. Think about that for a moment. It is one thing to hear such a prophecy, but it is quite different to actually believe that this would happen when she was an unmarried virgin. Mary had to be looking at what God could do rather than the complications of her current situation. For this, Elizabeth pronounced a blessing upon Mary.

1:46-55 - The Magnificat - Mary's Song

It is common for us to refer to this as a song, but the text is clear, "And Mary **said**..." Whether sung or spoken, this is a very beautiful poem about the goodness of God. It should be noted that there are striking similarities between Mary's song and that of Hannah, the mother of Samuel.

HANNAH'S SONG

My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies for I delight in your deliverance. There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the Lord is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed. The bows of warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who are hungry, hunger no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who had many sons pines away. The Lord brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The Lord sends poverty and wealthy; he humbles and he exalts.

MARY'S SONG

My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my savior, for he has been mindful of the humble estate of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me - Holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in the inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things, but he has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants for ever, even as he said to our fathers. Luke 1:47-55

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HANNAH'S SONG

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. For the foundations of the earth are the Lord's; upon them he has set the world. He will guard the feet of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness. It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the Lord will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the Lord will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed. I Samuel 2:1-10

MARY'S SONG

Study these two songs carefully and you will make several observations concerning them:

1. Both songs begin with personal praise to God.
2. Both songs celebrate God's care of the humble, poor and oppressed.
3. Both songs point to the destruction of the arrogant, powerful and rich.
4. Both songs describe God as greater than kings.
5. Both songs speak of God as defender and savior.
6. Both songs celebrate the holiness of God.
7. Hannah deals with the issue of barrenness, but Mary does not.
8. Mary deals with her ongoing reputation, but Hannah does not.
9. It seems obvious that Mary knew Hannah's song very well; she might have been able to quote it from memory, but her song was her own, the ecstasy of her own heart.

Now let's take a look at Mary's song in more careful detail. Mary indicated the intent of her song in the opening sentence. She said,

*My soul praises the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my savior.
Luke 1:46b, 47*

Mary's praise is personal. In the midst of this personal praise, however, Mary identifies God as "my savior." This is an important statement because only people who are less than perfect need a savior. Only those who have violated God's laws need one to redeem them. Mary does not identify any sin of which she was guilty, but her mention of the Savior is very personal - literally "the Savior of me."

In verse 48 and 49, Mary speaks very personally. She said,

For he hath looked upon the low estate of his handmaid (bondservant): for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is

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mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is unto generations and generations. Luke 1:48-50

Mary acknowledged the humble state of her family and social situation. Rather than see this as a sorrow, she understands that it is a source of praise to God, for He is not influenced by one's economic status. It is the holiness of God which causes Him to ignore human values and look upon the character of the person instead.

Mary looks beyond her own situation to the way God deals with people of power and position. She said,

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers. Luke 1:51-55

In verse 51, Mary focuses upon God's dealings with people who are rich, but proud. Their lot will be devastating - they will be scattered. This is a military picture of an army that has been defeated and is in flight.

In verses 52 and 53, Mary celebrates God's concern for the lowly, like herself. It was very important to her to portray how God feeds the hungry and allows those who have lived in luxury to experience the poverty they have enforced upon others. God removes the arrogant sovereign from his throne, no matter how well protected he may be.

In verses 54 and 55, Mary turns her attention to God's dealings with Israel. God will help Israel, for this nation is His servant. It is God's way of showing mercy to Abraham, by being merciful to his descendants continually. This was her outlook despite the fact that at this very moment, she and all Israel lived under the heavy hand of Rome. Mary had tremendous insight. In a time of bondage, tribute and servitude, she could say that God helped His servant Israel. The truth of the matter was that God had helped His servant Israel on many similar occasions when they were in bondage. It takes great spiritual depth to discern the helping hand of God while experiencing the oppression of an enemy. It is the ability to have peace in the midst of trial rather than demanding release from trial. Mary knew that this had been the experience of Israel under the Egyptians and she knew that God never changes.

1:56-Mary's Stay With Elizabeth

This is a one-sentence paragraph. It raises some questions. Notice how Luke presents the information:

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home. Luke 1:56

In Luke 1:36, the angel is quoted as telling Mary that Elizabeth was already in her sixth month of pregnancy. If Mary stayed for about three months, then it is entirely possible that she was present when John the Baptist was born. The text neither supports nor denies this possibility. If Mary was present, and if she was already pregnant herself, then Jesus was present at the birth of John the Baptist.

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1:57-66 - The Birth And Naming Of John The Baptist

Verse 57 sounds as though Mary had already left. Verse 56 ends with her return to her own home. Verse 57 begins with the time arriving for Elizabeth to have her baby. This, in itself, is not conclusive evidence that Mary was not present.

Verse 58 and 59 give us a glimpse into the cultural life of the area. Notice how Luke describes it:

Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. Luke 1:58

The text does not say so, but these may have been the same people who would have mocked and ridiculed her for years because she had no children. These people considered it a judgment of God when a couple were unable to have children. Whatever the case may have been, at this point they were rejoicing with her. William Barclay adds some very interesting information to this scene with these words:

When the time of the birth was near at hand, the friends and the local musicians gathered near the house. When the birth was announced, if it was a boy, the musicians broke into music and song, and there was universal congratulation and rejoicing. If it was a girl the musicians went silently and regretfully away.⁵

Another scene from their culture is present in verse 59:

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John." Luke 1:59, 60

It appears that the family and neighbors were intent upon naming the child after his father. This was common, particularly if the father was well known. Elizabeth, despite the custom of naming a boy after a male relative, was determined to name the child John.

In good Jewish fashion, the family and neighbors pursued the point just a little. They said to her,

"There is no one among your relatives who has that name." They then made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. Luke 1:61, 62

Having failed to convince Elizabeth that the child should be named for his father, the friends and family appealed to Zechariah. He was very forceful in his reply.

He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's amazement he wrote, "His name is John." Luke 1:63

In the mind of Zechariah, their attention to the naming of the child was wasted effort. Note that Zechariah did not say, "His name *will* be called John." The naming of the child was already complete. Zechariah said, "His name *is* John." That is not surprising to us

⁵ . William Barclay, *The Gospel Of Luke*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), p. 11.

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because the angel had instructed Zechariah, nearly ten months before, "You are to give him the name John." Luke 1:13

The naming of a child was an important decision. Some children were named for relatives. Others were named for what the parents hoped the child would become. Still others used the name to profess their faith. Elijah, for instance, meant "Jehovah is my God." The name John was a shortened form of the name Jehohanan which means "God is gracious."

This was a surprise and shock to all present. They thought that these parents would follow the local custom, but they followed the instructions of the angel of the Lord instead. We must remember that Zechariah and Elizabeth did this despite the misunderstanding of their family and neighbors.

A marvellous thing happened following Zechariah's announcement of the name of his son.

Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God. Luke 1:64

It is interesting that God used the silencing of Zechariah as a sign to him that this was an act of God. God also used the releasing of Zechariah's tongue as a sign to the people that what had happened was certainly an act of God. Notice the reaction of the people who were still reeling from the shock of the name of the baby.

The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him. Luke 1:65, 66

The neighbors were still struggling with the naming of the child. They were groping for some reason why the parents would refuse to let them do as it was customary to do. In the aftermath of Zechariah's regaining his speech, they now began to wonder if this meant that this baby was destined to some kind of special position before God. That, of course, was exactly what was going to happen.

1:67-79 - The Prophecy of Zechariah - The Benedictus

The prophecy of Zechariah begins with an introduction we have seen before:

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. Luke 1:67

Again, the filling of the Holy Spirit was given for a specific task. Zechariah was filled so that he could prophecy. He was to foretell information about his newborn son that they had no other way to discover in advance. Zechariah was not only prophetic, he was aware of the precise ministry of his son. Notice how he spoke:

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us - to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,

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and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace. Luke 1:68-79

In the opening part of Zechariah's song, he was obviously speaking of Jesus. Notice that he spoke of Jesus first, his new born son second. He knew that salvation would come from Jesus, not from John. He was as excited talking about Jesus as he was about his first-born son, John. This is clear evidence that he indeed was filled with the Holy Spirit.

We must remember that this entire prophecy was given against a background of the oppression of Rome against Israel. Rome was guilty of all of these tragic things Zechariah mentioned. Though Zechariah was of the tribe of Levi, he prophesied that their salvation would come from the lineage of David; the tribe of Judah, not Levi. Zechariah was keenly aware of what the Scriptures had to say about what God would do and he announced it with great joy, despite the fact that it would mean that his own son would not be the one through whom these great miracles would take place. There is a special humility which is most obvious in the life and words of Zechariah.

In verse 68, notice that Zechariah speaks of the "Lord, the God of Israel" visiting and bringing redemption to Israel. This is significant. The idea of visiting has to do with God being present with His people. This is very important in view of the fact that their enemies thought that they had to go to the place where their gods were located in order to be with them. In Israel, it is God who takes the initiative. In pagan cultures, the common people must initiate their concern for the deity, if any concern is to be shown.

In verse 69, God speaks of a "horn of salvation." The horn of an eastern animal was usually the symbol of great physical strength. The sheep and goats were especially powerful and thus the ascription to God was one of unmatched power and strength. The Holy Spirit prophesied through Zechariah that this "horn of salvation" would come from Judah. In verse 70, Zechariah indicates, parenthetically, that God had spoken of this through the mouth of the prophets of the Old Testament.

The lot of Israel, from the time they entered the land of Canaan, had not been easy. They had been conquered, enslaved, abused and plotted against by enemies on all sides. High on the priority list of every Jew was a longing to be freed from the bondage of their neighbors. The message God spoke through Zechariah would grip the heart of every Jewish listener when he said,

*... salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us-- to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,...
Luke 1:71, 72*

The Jews wanted to find relief from the constant struggle with oppressors. Even in our day, that has not been realized, but the Scriptures are clear: it will come. It was not by accident that the Messiah was to be the Prince of Peace. The Savior, this "horn of salvation" of which the prophets spoke, was to bring salvation from the enemies and oppressors of Israel in order to show mercy toward the forefathers of Israel. Because Israel was to be a light to the nations, it often meant that they suffered ill-treatment from

those who opposed the God of Israel. Add to this the judgment of Israel brought upon themselves and they spent a great deal of time in suffering. Zechariah was saying that one day this Savior would mercifully deliver Israel from all their enemies.

When Zechariah prophesied, he remembered, as every Jew would remember, that God had made a covenant with Israel through Abraham. Zechariah was prophesying that one day this Savior would remember the holy covenant that had been made with Abraham: that God would bless Israel, would bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse Israel, and most of all that God would remember that he had given Canaan to Israel as an everlasting inheritance.

In verses 73-75, Zechariah's prophesy clarifies what he meant. He identifies the covenant as "the oath He swore unto Abraham our father." It was the oath that God made to Abraham to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies. This would be a new experience to this whole generation of Jewish people. Most of them had lived their entire life under Roman dominance.

Zechariah continued by describing the purpose of this deliverance. He identified three reasons God was going to keep this covenant with Israel through Abraham:

1. To enable them to serve God without fear
2. To enable them to serve God in holiness
3. To enable them to serve God in righteousness

In each instance, according to verse 75, this was to be true as long as they lived.

Notice how Zechariah described the three. He begins with confidence which enables one to live a life of purity, which results in righteousness. Experience teaches us that peace follows righteousness which follows holy living.

The remaining four verses of this song form a single sentence and dealt with Zechariah's son, John. Zechariah's prophetic word was formed in these terms:

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace. Luke 1:76-79

Though Zechariah was announcing a prophecy of the Lord, he was at the same time pronouncing the fatherly blessing upon his newborn son. In saying that his son would be a prophet of the "Most High", Zechariah was speaking of a poetic name for God: "elyon" which stressed His supremacy. This is the God who is universal and omnipotent; the place of our protection and the shelter of Israel. Zechariah prophesied that his son would be the spokesman for the protector of Israel.

Saying that his son would, "go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him," was a word picture that everyone who heard Zechariah would fully understand. In those days, when a king travelled, there was a herald who preceded him and announced to everyone in every village along the way that the king was coming. This was a special place of honor that Zechariah prophesied for his son. It was also an announcement that the Messiah was going to come during their lifetime.

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Zechariah dealt just as clearly with the purpose of the coming of the king. In verse 77, Zechariah said,

To give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. Luke 1:77

The Messiah, their king, would come as a Savior. The Jews were clear that no one but God could forgive sin. Thus, Zechariah was saying that the king for whom his son would be the herald would indeed be God. Jesus would come to give Israel the knowledge of salvation by forgiving their sins. Jesus got into difficulty with the Pharisees for teaching the same thing.

Zechariah continued his description. Notice that even when he prophesied about the ministry of his son, he ended up talking about Jesus.

Because of the tender mercy of God, by which the rising sun will come to shine on those living in darkness... Luke 1:78, 79a

The word "rising sun" in our text is not a literal translation. The word "anatolae", "ἀνατόλαι" is used to identify the direction "east." It is also used to describe sunlight as well as the rising sun and stars. The idea of the prophetic word is that Jesus is the one through whom light came into our dark world to shine upon the people of darkness. The coming of Jesus; the shining of His light in the darkness of our lives, Zechariah says, is an expression of the tender mercy of our God. Repeatedly, in the Old and New Testament, God is portrayed as a most merciful God. This stands in contrast to the picture of God, held by some, in which they view Him as harsh and punitive. We never speak of Him in such terms, but one of the names for Jesus is "Rising Sun." It is a reference to what Isaiah prophesied when he said,

Arise, shine for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. Isaiah 60:1

It seems clear that Isaiah is referring to the Messiah and Zechariah prophecies in the same vein.

Verse 79 is quite interesting. Zechariah used a figure of speech which is hard for us to decipher. He spoke in this manner:

To shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace. Luke 1:79

Our first question must be, of whom is Zechariah speaking? We can safely assume that people living in darkness are non-believers. They live in darkness. But, who are the people who live in the shadow of death? The Psalmist speaks of "the valley of the shadow of death." We can make assumptions about this, but one can not be certain. This is one hint. Immediately after Zechariah spoke of "...to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death," he then said, "to guide *our* feet." The word "our" has to deal with Jewish people who believe in God.

Zechariah concludes his song with a reference to peace. He said,

...to guide our feet into the path of peace. Luke 1:79b

Because the Jewish people had suffered and struggled so much and so often, there is something deep within them that longs for peace. Every Jewish person who heard

Zechariah would affirm what he was prophesying. The Rising Sun, Zechariah was saying, will deliver us from evil. He will guide our feet to a way of living and to situations where we will ultimately find peace.

1:80 - A Summary of John's Early Life

Verse 80 is a paragraph all by itself. In this brief sentence, Luke summarizes the entire childhood and some of the adult life of John the Baptist. It is a very simple statement, but it would be easy to misunderstand. The sentence is made up of two parts:

1. An affirmation of John's early life
2. A sweeping summary of the preparation for John's public ministry

Look at each of these parts separately. Luke said,

And the child grew and became strong in spirit... Luke 1:80a

This statement marks John's rite of passage. Like any other child, John grew. The thing that characterizes his maturity was that he became strong in spirit. Spiritual things set the stage for spiritual strength and growth for him.

Luke makes one other statement about John, when he said,

*... and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.
Luke 1:80b*

The way that this passage is written indicates that when Luke wrote these words he was not simply thinking of a sandy piece of real estate. The "desert" might better be translated "desolate." The area where Zechariah and some of the other priests lived was not far from a desolate area near the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. It may well be that this is what Luke referred to in his statement. There are some who believe that John the Baptist was well acquainted with the group called the "Essenes." These strict Jews lived on the west side of the Dead Sea, not far north of Masada.

The final thing Luke tells us about John is that he remained in the desert or abandoned area "until he appeared publicly." This probably represents the beginning of his public ministry which took place along the Jordan River.

The Conclusion

This long introductory chapter, with all its poetic beauty, is filled with songs of praise for God's mercy to Israel. Think carefully about the implications which grow out of the song that Zechariah sang and what these concerns mean to our own faith. Both Mary and Zechariah praised God in the midst of untoward circumstances. It should have the same effect upon our lives when we consider their ways.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 4

LUKE 2:1 - 52

THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF JESUS

- 1 There are six paragraphs in Luke 2. Please write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph on the chart below.

2: 1- 7	
2: 8-20	
2:21	
2:22-39	
2:40-51	
2:52	

2. Scan 2:1-52. Approximately how many years of Jesus' life are covered in this chapter? What do you learn from this fact?
3. 2:1-7 deals with the trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem.
- Why would Joseph and Mary need to go to Bethlehem to be registered? There was a registration place in Nazareth. Why couldn't Joseph register there?
 - Put yourself in Joseph's shoes. How would you explain Mary's pregnancy to your mother?
4. Luke 2:8-20 is a favorite reading for Christmas eve.
- Think of yourself as one of the shepherds. What would you feel if suddenly angels appeared and spoke to you?
 - What significance do you attach to the name "Christ the Lord?"
 - In 2:15, the shepherds excitedly decided to go to Bethlehem to see this miracle for themselves. Is there something about that decision that seems strange to you?
 - There is a contrast in 2:17-20. What two people or things are contrasted? What does the text say about each? What did you learn from this discovery?
5. 2:21 deals with Jesus' circumcision.
- List the information that Luke gives us about Simeon. What did you learn from this information?
 - Matthew tells of the long trip into Egypt. In Luke it is as though that long trip never happened. Why would that be?
 - What reason can you find for the fact that the baby was given the name "Jesus" on the eighth day?
6. 2:22-29 takes place in the temple.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

- a. List the information that Luke gives us about Simeon. What did you learn from this information?
 - b. Study the statement Simeon made to Mary and Joseph. What did this message say to them about Jesus?
 - c. In 2:34, 35 Simeon prophesied about the future. What pieces of information about the future did Simeon give Mary and Joseph?
 - d. In 2:36-38 Luke tells of the approach of Anna, the prophetess.
 1. Why would this be important?
 2. What does Luke tell us about Anna?
 3. Read 2:36-38 carefully. Is Luke saying Anna is 84 or 105 years of age?
 4. What was Anna's prophetic message?
7. In 2:40-51 Luke tells of Jesus' discussions with the teachers in the temple.
- a. What was the importance of Jesus' age in 2:42?
 - b. Put yourself in Mary's place when she and Joseph found Jesus in the temple (Luke 2:46). How would you feel when you saw Jesus? How would you feel when you saw Jesus in discussion with the teachers of the Law?
 - c. Put yourself in Joseph's place on the same occasion. How would you respond to this situation?
 - d. In 2:48, 49 there is an exchange between Mary and Jesus.
 1. How do you feel as you say the things Mary said?
 2. How do you feel when you say the things Jesus said?
 3. Compare and contrast Mary's use of "your father" and Jesus' use of "my father." What does this tell you?
8. 2:52 is the summary of the chapter. What does Luke tell you in these words?

LESSON 4 – LUKE 2:1-52

THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF JESUS

There are at least seven paragraphs which make up chapter two of Luke's Gospel.

2:1-7	The Birth of Jesus
2:8-20	The Angel's Announcement to the Shepherds
2:21	The Circumcision of Jesus
2:22-39	Simeon Encounters the Infant Jesus
2:40-51	Jesus Was Left Behind in the Temple
2:52	Jesus Grew in Stature and Favor

If you take a moment to look at the overview of this chapter you will notice that between Luke 2:1 and Luke 3:1 approximately 30 years have passed. This helps us to understand that though the information here is important, it is not the focus of what the author wants to convey to his reader.

2:1-7 - The Birth of Jesus

Luke begins the account of the birth of Jesus with the precision that befits a person of his training and skill. Luke pinpoints the period in two ways: one quite general, the other, more specific.

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) Luke 2:1,2

The general time designation was the reign of Augustus. It is possible for us to pinpoint this period with accuracy. Born Gaius Octavius in 63 B.C., the grand nephew of Julius Caesar, he began his 44-year reign in 31 B.C. and ruled until his death in 14 A.D.

A more specific timeframe is identified by referring to the governorship of Quirinius. This has presented some problems down through the years. The following statement seems to put the issue in prospective:

Luke's accuracy has been vindicated, as against the supposed inconsistency that as Quirinius was Governor of Syria in A.D. 6, ten years after the birth of Christ, the census, as "the first," could not have taken place. At the time mentioned by Luke, Cilicia, of which Quirinius was Governor, was separated from Cyprus and joined to Syria. His later direct Governorship of Syria itself accounts for the specific inclusion of, and reference to, his earlier connection with that Province. Justin Martyr, a native of Palestine, writing in the Middle of the 2nd century, asserts thrice that Quirinius was present in Syria at the time mentioned by Luke (see Apol. , 1:34,46; Tropho 78).¹

¹ John R. Kohlenberger III, Ed. *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984) p. 363.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

A serious question arises over Luke's great care to identify Roman leadership in Palestine at the time of Jesus' birth: Why would Luke find it necessary to explain these dates so carefully to anyone who lived in that part of the world then? For someone living in Palestine, it would be meaningless. The same probably would be true for someone who lived in Rome. If, however, Theophilus lived in Ephesus, he might not have known who governed in Palestine or another Roman province. I feel certain that Luke did not think he was writing specifically for people who would live centuries after his writing.

The census was usually for two purposes:

1. For tax purposes, and
2. To discover the men who could be drafted into the army.

Because Jews were exempt from serving in the army, only the motive of deciding taxes was applicable to them.

Verse three could seem strange for many people today.

And everyone went to his own town to register. Luke 2:3

The Roman government recognized tribal power structures in Palestine. The government identified people by the tribe to which they belonged rather than the city in which they were born. Only in their birth tribe would there be any records of people related to the members of the tribe. Because of this, the people were required at great hardship and expense, to travel to the tribe of their birth to be recorded for the census. Rome repeated this census every fourteen years. Some have said that this was because boys of fourteen years were conscripted into military service.

Notice the extreme precision of Luke's presentation as he describes Joseph's journey:

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. Luke 2:4

Notice he mentions the village of departure, Nazareth, first, and then the provincial area, Galilee, followed by the provincial area of their destination, Judea, and the village to which they were going, Bethlehem. Luke carefully identifies, in two ways, that Joseph was of the lineage of David, and thus of the kingly line.

Luke mentions some things in such a matter-of-fact style that it could elude a person who was not aware of the implications of some of his words. Luke 2:5 is a case in point.

He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. Luke 2:5

We must remember that it was common for a man and woman who were "pledged" to each other to behave much like married people in every way except sexual activity. It was expected that a "pledged" man bring his future wife with him on such a journey. People would probably wonder if he did not. The thing that would raise eyebrows was the fact that this pledged bride was going to have a baby. If the baby was Joseph's, then his family would reject him and have nothing to do with him. If, on the other hand, Joseph was not the father of this unborn child, then the family would reject the "pledged" bride. Neither the bride nor the groom would be welcomed in the home of any relative.

THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF JESUS

People have written and taught some unfortunate things about Joseph. It can neither be confirmed nor denied that Joseph was old and abusive to Mary and the family. This much is certain, however, Joseph took Mary with him to his home knowing that it was very possible that they would encounter some unfortunate reactions from family and friends. The angel told Joseph to take Mary as his wife and he did it.

No one could ever accuse a new baby of being overly concerned about being born at a convenient time. This birth was no exception.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son... Luke 2:6,7a

Put yourself in the place of Joseph for a minute. You have not seen your family members and neighbors for a long time. Suddenly you appear for the census with your "pledged" bride and she is ready to deliver a baby. Imagine how difficult it would be for him to try to explain this to members of the family. Think of what they would think and probably say when Joseph told them that an angel told him to take Mary as his wife for the infant was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Can't you just hear the family sarcastically chorus, "Sure it was!"?

Put yourself in the place of Mary. You are an unmarried virgin and about to give birth to a baby. Every bride wants to make a good impression on her future in-laws. Certainly she could feel the harsh glances she received every time a family member looked at her. She had to wonder, as they approached the village of Bethlehem, will they speak to me after they see that I am pregnant. She had to wonder how she could possibly get them to believe her statement that the angel appeared to her as well and told her that "the power of the Most High will overshadow you..." She had to wonder if they would even let her into their house much less accept her as a member of the family.

Notice how Luke describes the birth of Jesus.

And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Luke 2:7

Every person of that day who read Luke's description would know exactly what he meant. On the other hand, because we are not a part of that time and culture, there are some phrases in the sentence that could escape our understanding.

First, Luke tells us that "... she wrapped him in cloths..." When Luke speaks of wrapping the baby, he used the word for bandage, a swaddling cloth, to swathe. It was an oriental custom to wrap the newborn infant with narrow strips of cloth (It is possible that these strips of cloth were taken from the "tsitsit" of a priest. The tsitsit was a long undergarment, with a fringe on the bottom, to remind the priest of the Law God had given to Israel). It was a sign that Mary took good care of the baby. It gives you an impression of the kind of mother Mary was.

After the baby had been wrapped in the cloth, Luke tells us:

"She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn ." Luke 2:7b

Wherever the little family was, it was a place where people usually cared for their animals. This may have been an animal shed, but it might just as well have been a structure

adjoining the home of a relative. There is no way to be sure. The word "manger" describes the place where animal food was placed.

It might not be too easy for us to understand what Luke meant when he said there was "no room for them in the inn." The word "inn" does not describe a first century motel. The word in the text is "katalumati," "καταλύματι." This word does not mean "inn," but refers to a guest room which was often found on top of Palestinian homes. It is the kind of place where Jesus and His disciples met for their Passover. An "inn," on the other hand, was a place which often had a very bad reputation. In some versions of the Old Testament, it speaks of Rahab not as a prostitute, but as an innkeeper. This gives you the idea of the kind of place an "inn" really was.

Why would there be no room for Mary, Joseph and the baby? There are a couple of possibilities. The crowding caused by the whole clan returning to Bethlehem for the census registration was one possibility. Everyone in town was a relative and when everyone returned, there may not have been enough spare rooms to house everyone. There is at least one other possibility. Remember, Joseph was not yet married and yet he had his very pregnant "pledged" bride with him and she was about to give birth to her child. The family would not take kindly to such a situation. It would be viewed as a source of unbearable shame for everyone connected with the family. It is possible that because of their embarrassing situation, the family decided that there was no room for them in the guest rooms. Whatever the reason, this was just the first of many instances where Jesus would be mistreated and denied the kindness that any other human being would be afforded in this city of David.

2:8-20 - The Angel's Announcement to the Shepherds

The scene was common. Shepherds were especially vigilant with their flocks at night. Thieves and predators stalked the night hours. In all the stories of this announcement there is a picture of the angel in the heavens. According to the text, it might better be translated "An angel of the Lord came upon them." That might mean the angel was in the heavens, but not necessarily. Put yourself in their sandals. It is night; you are trying to be alert for the safety of your flock; suddenly, out of the silence, you see and hear an angel; suddenly the darkness is shattered by the glory of the Lord shining around you. It is not at all surprising that Luke tells us that they were very frightened.

The response of the angel is exactly what we should expect from an angel of God.

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10b,11

The announcement that the angel brought was very important, but the condition of the shepherds dictated another agenda. The angel had to minister to the shepherds' anxiety before they could hear the astonishing message the angel brought to them. That kind of care is characteristic of the God this angel served.

The angel spoke of "the town of David." Everyone in that part of the country knew that the town of David was Bethlehem. It was the place of David's birth. By identifying the location of this great blessing, the angel made the announcement precise enough that the shepherds could check it out. That is the way God is.

THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF JESUS

The angel's announcement contained some shocking news. The message contained the fact that this child was to be a "Savior." All Israel, whether shepherd or priest, knew that one day a savior would come and deliver Israel. They thought of this as a political savior, but a savior none-the-less. This announcement would be cause for great celebration even among the lowly shepherds.

The angel had more surprises. The angel identified this savior as Christ the Lord. Too often we think of these names as simply names. It was far more than that to the people of Israel. The name Christ was the Greek name for what the Jews referred to in Hebrew as Meshiah. Christ literally means "the anointed one." It was the way they spoke of the one who would come from God and redeem Israel from their sin and oppression. Imagine the surprise and joy of the shepherds when the angel said that this baby that had been born was the Messiah. There were great students of the law, in that day, who did nothing except look carefully for the Messiah, the anointed one of God. Now the shepherds, the outcasts of the society, the no-goods of that culture, people thought to have sexual relations with animals, heard that the Messiah had come and probably felt that no one else even knew about it.

The angel went on. This Savior and Messiah the angel also called Lord. Again, to us this seems like just another name by which Jesus was identified. It was far more than that to the Jews. The word "Lord" in the Greek language is exactly the same as the name Jehovah in the Hebrew. If you look in Exodus 20:1, in the Septuagint, (the Greek translation of the Old Testament Hebrew) you will notice, that it translates Jehovah as "kurios," "Kurios, the Greek word for Lord. Again, imagine what this did to the minds of these poor shepherds.

The angel concluded his remarks by giving them a way to be sure that they had found the child of whom the angel spoke. The angel said,

This will be the sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Luke 2:12

This was important. The shepherds needed a way to know that they had found the right baby. The "sign" which the angel gave was quite specific. There might be many young babies in Bethlehem, but not many of them would be found lying in a manger. That just did not happen. Nevertheless, that is where they were to find the infant Jesus.

The second part of this sign was that they would find this baby wrapped in "cloths." These "cloths" were made of narrow strips of cloth, but not just any kind of cloth. These strips of cloth were taken from the "Tsitsit" (an undergarment worn by the faithful of Israel) which had been worn by a priest. Even in His birth, Jesus was wrapped in priestly garb. This would not be hard for any Jewish man to identify. This was a twofold sign. It was a sign that would give conclusive evidence for the shepherds. At the same time it would give a rich symbol of what the rest of that little baby's life would be all about. He would be the priest of His people.

When the angel finished the announcement, the shepherds were shocked at least once more.

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." Luke 2:13,14

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Imagine what the shepherds thought when this happened. The still darkness of night in the open was common to these men. Suddenly the angel appears and then the heavenly host also appear praising God together. This had to startle them. The emphasis is on praise to God. Note that the heavenly hosts pose the heavens and the earth in juxtaposition to each other. It is as important to share peace with appropriate men on earth as it is for angels to glorify God in the heavens.

Luke reports the shepherd's response to this startling display in the heavens:

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." Luke 2:15

The shepherds began this experience in deep fear. They concluded the excitement by going to Bethlehem to check for themselves. Notice that the shepherds continue to ascribe this whole experience to God. This is obviously something that God has done for them. The shepherds were not known for being religious people. Nevertheless, the shepherds remained convinced that it was God who had revealed this to them.

Luke gives an exciting account of the shepherd's discovery of the infant Jesus:

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. Luke 2:16

The angel had given them signs that would make it easy for the shepherds to know if they had found the baby of whom they spoke. That was exactly what they found. They knew that this was the child that the angel spoke about.

Again, Luke records the response of the shepherds:

When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. Luke 2:17,18

In effect, Luke is saying that the shepherds, of all people, were the first evangelists. They went and told everyone they could what God had told them and what they had found. Luke simply tells us that everyone who heard the shepherds was startled and amazed. That may not seem like much to us, but there was a great deal involved in that statement. We need to remember that God did not exactly choose the top of the social register to make the announcement of the coming of the Messiah. Shepherds were the very bottom. They were outcasts among the people of Israel. They were forbidden to stay in any inn. This rejection was because of the fact that they were considered people without conscience or morals. The fact that people would listen to them at all was a miracle. Nevertheless, these are the ones God chose to share the good news about the coming of His Son, our Savior. This tells us something important about God. Unlike our thinking, God often chose the rejected to accomplish His will in the world.

Luke draws a comparison between the response of the shepherds and the response of Mary to the birth of Jesus. Of Mary, Luke wrote:

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. Luke 2:19

THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF JESUS

While the shepherds were busy telling everyone in sight, Mary was busy being very quiet and thoughtful about what God had done to her and to her son. Luke used two very well known words to describe Mary's reflection: "treasured" and "pondered." The word translated "treasured" literally means to keep safe, to be certain not to forget, to protect. There are experiences in life that are so important, so exciting that we take special care to ingrain them upon our memory. Mary "treasured" the events of this day. Mary also "pondered" these events. The word pondered is a compound word which literally means to throw together. When used of conversation it means to consult with, to confer. In a sense, Luke is saying that Mary conferred with herself, she talked with herself; she meditated upon the enormous events that had taken place.

Verse 20 is a study in contrast. Mary is keeping all these thoughts to herself while the shepherds are telling everyone in sight what had happened. Notice the way Luke tells the story:

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. Luke 2:20

It may not seem like much to the modern reader, but this was a shocking statement for a person of the first century. Shepherds had a reputation, but it was not for praising and glorifying God. Contrary to what one might expect, here were the people at the very bottom of the spiritual ladder praising God and giving Him glory. Certainly the people who heard them were shocked beyond belief. It tells you something of what God can do with even the very worst in society when He touches their lives.

2:21 - The Circumcision Of Jesus

This paragraph is only one sentence long, but it was very important to Mary and Joseph. Notice how Luke relates the story:

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. Luke 2:21

According to the instructions of the Old Testament, a male child was circumcised on the eighth day (Genesis 17:12). On that occasion, it was also customary to officially name the boy. It had been announced to Mary, in Luke 1:31, that the boy was to be called "Jesus." The announcement on this day was an official announcement of what had already been decided. Luke, in this verse, is pointing out that the family carefully followed the customs of the very religious Jews concerning the birth of a child.

2:22-39 - Simeon Encounters The Infant Jesus

This paragraph continues the ceremonial requirements when a male child was born in Israel. The instructions were given, in Leviticus 12:2-5, concerning the purity of a new mother. In the case of a male child, the mother was impure for 40 days. At the end of that time, the mother was to come to the temple and bring a lamb for a burnt offering and a pigeon for a sin offering. If, however, they were poor, then the mother must bring two doves for her offering. Like Hannah, I Samuel 1:28, she brought the young boy and presented him to the Lord. It acknowledged two things:

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

1. The first born son belonged to the Lord. This was a remembrance of the fact that God passed over the firstborn of Israel in the tenth plague in Egypt.

The Lord said to Moses, "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal." Exodus 13:1

2. That child came from God. Luke is showing that Jesus was treated like every other Jewish boy. His parents fulfilled every requirement concerning the newborn baby.

Luke tells this story in typical Jewish fashion. Notice what he said:

*And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were fulfilled, they brought him up to Jerusalem, to **present** him to the Lord... Luke 2:22*

This is precisely what Hannah and her husband did with Samuel. This is the instruction of Exodus 13:13

*And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break its neck: all the first born of man among thy sons shalt thou **redeem**. Exodus 13:13*

Mary and Joseph were fulfilling two commands:

1. The purification of the mother and son.
2. The redeeming of the firstborn son because he belonged to the Lord.

This ceremony is fulfilled, in the Jewish home, even today. The Rabbi will sit down with the father and instruct him to either pay the cost of redeeming the boy or turn the child over to God. Like much of what God did with Israel, it was a way to remind them of what God had done for them.

Verses 22 - 24 set the stage for the encounter with Simeon in verse 25. In verses 25 - 35, Luke gives us at least ten important information about this man named Simeon:

- a. Simeon lived in Jerusalem (v. 25). It is not known if he was originally from the area or came there for this specific time.
- b. His name was Simeon v. (25). The name means "the hearing one." It is not possible to identify him with any other person in Scripture who bore that name.
- c. Luke tells us he was "righteous" and "devout." The word "righteous" literally means to be without prejudice. It is the quality of being just. "Devout," on the other hand, means to take hold of well. It is to exercise extreme caution in one's relationship to God. It is the rare combination of fear and love in which the child of God dearly loves to obey God intensely. It is a combination of fear and love that mold a holy relationship with God.
- d. Simeon looked for the consolation of Israel - (2:25). The word "consolation" is "paraclaesin" "paraklhsin" in Greek. This is the same root from which we get the word "paraclete" which refers to the Holy Spirit as the "comforter." Wherever "the consolation of Israel" is mentioned in Scripture, it means the coming of the Messiah and the peace that He brings.

THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF JESUS

Luke says that Simeon "looked for" the consolation of Israel. The word "looked for" is a compound word:

1. pros πρόσ - from, for, near
2. dexomai δέχομαι - receive, welcome, embrace

This word carries the idea of a comfort that Israel joyfully embraces. In our understanding, we would say that Simeon was looking for the coming of the Anointed one of Jehovah, Jesus.

- e. The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon, (2:25). Usually, this statement carries the idea of empowerment for service. Thus far in the Gospel of Luke it has been an empowerment to speak prophetically. It appears to be the same in this instance.
- f. God had revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ - 2:26. This appears to be part of the prophetic preparation of the Holy Spirit which enabled Simeon for service. This announcement prompted Simeon to be watchful to discover the coming of the Christ -- the Anointed; the Messiah.
- g. Simeon was led by the Holy Spirit - 2:27. In this way, Luke seems to account for the fact that Simeon was coming into the temple at the precise time that Mary and Joseph were bringing the infant Jesus. Only the Holy Spirit could inform Simeon that this baby boy, out of all the baby boys that were brought to the temple for circumcision and presentation, was the one for whom he had been waiting and watching.
- h. Simeon believed what God had told him - 2:29. Notice how Simeon praised God when he took the infant Jesus in his arms:

"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." Luke 2:29-32

He was so convinced that what God had promised had now come to pass that he was telling God to let him die for God's promise to him had been fulfilled.

- i. Simeon carried out the prophetic office of pronouncing blessing on Mary and Joseph.

In verse 34, Luke tells us,

Then Simeon blessed them... Luke 2:34a

The prophets are known for their pronouncements of woe and doom. That is an important part of their ministry, but not the only part. They were also to pronounce blessing on behalf of the Lord. It is this ministry that Simeon provided for Joseph and Mary. It certainly was needed in their lives for the task of nurturing the one who would be the Savior of the world.

- j. Simeon spoke prophetically concerning Jesus in 2:34, 35.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Notice that Simeon's prophecy, concerning Jesus, deals with three different people or groups:

"...This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Luke 2:34, 35

1. Simeon spoke about groups of people. These people are divided into two groups: those who are falling and those who are rising. Simeon's message here is not that God will do something harsh to people, but rather when these people encounter Jesus, their rejection of Jesus would result in their falling, their experience of judgment. On the other hand, there are those who encounter Jesus and receive Him gladly. These people are spoken of as rising. The word "rising" is later used to describe resurrection. It appears to be used, in this instance, to describe rising from the death of sin to the life of righteousness.
2. Simeon spoke about the infant Jesus. The prophet spoke of Jesus as a sign to be spoken against in Luke 2:36. The word "sign" is a warning or admonition. In Matthew 16:4, Jesus spoke of the "sign of Jonah." This was a sign of judgment in two ways: a. Jonah's message was one of judgment - repent or be destroyed. b. Jonah's personal life was also a sign. When he refused to obey God's commission, God caused conditions that helped Jonah choose obedience over flight.

Simeon was saying that the life and ministry of Jesus was a sign; a warning against an evil lifestyle that people would angrily challenge. People would contradict the message that this infant would bring to them. There would be intense disputes between the life and ministry of Jesus and those who disagreed with Him - Pharisees and Scribes.

Simeon also prophesied of another result of Jesus' ministry. He said,

... so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. Luke 2:35

People cannot be neutral when it comes to Jesus. We must either choose to follow Jesus or to stand against Him. As people meet Him, their values and choices stand out. The whole world will know what is important to us.

3. Simeon also spoke about Mary. He said,

And a sword will pierce your own soul too. Luke 2:35b

There were two sizes of swords: a. A short sword or dagger. b. A much larger, longer sword. This word is sometimes used to describe a spear. It is at least a weapon which will inflict intense anguish and death. It is this latter image to which Simeon refers. Simeon was saying that this larger sword shall pierce - go clear through - the heart of Mary. This is a vivid word picture. Simeon was prophesying that events relating to her son would bring almost unbearable anguish to her.

Luke immediately launches into the prophetic message of Anna. Luke gives several pieces of information about her. This is important because she is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture.

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1. She was a prophetess - (Luke 2:36). A prophetess was a prophet who happened to be female. You will find them in the Old Testament, the New Testament and in post-New Testament times.
2. Anna was the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. We know nothing more about Anna's father. The fact that he was of the tribe of Asher suggests that the family came from the western slopes of Galilee. The family inheritance was part of the plain of Esdraelon.
3. We know that Anna was very old. There is more than one possibility concerning the age of Anna. a. It is possible that Anna was 84 at the time of this incident. This would mean that having been married for seven years and probably married at twelve years of age, or more, she had been a widow for 65 years or less. b. A second possibility is that she married at the age of 12 or more, was married for seven years and was a widow for 84 years. This would make her 103 years of age. It is not possible to tell from the text, what Luke's intent was. Notice the wording of our text:

And then was a widow until she was eighty-four. Luke 2:37

The Greek text does not translate in this manner at all. The way the Greek text is worded, however, is enlightening. A literal translation might read:

"Having lived years with a husband seven from the virginity of her, and she a widow years eighty-four..." Luke 2:37

This wording lends itself to the idea that she had been a widow for 84 years. Again, this is far from conclusive.

Verse 37 could be misleading. Luke states:

...She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Luke 2:37

The statement sounds as though Anna spent 24 hours a day in the temple. That probably was not so. The temple was closed each night and she would not be permitted to stay then. It appears that Luke's intention was that the major interest in Anna's life was worship and she did little else.

Whatever may be the real situation, it appears that the message Luke was conveying was that here was a woman for whom life had not been easy. Nevertheless, the central priority of her life was the worship of God. She would rather pray than eat. She would rather spend her time in prayer than more comfortable things that a woman her age might choose to do.

Luke gives an interesting insight. He points out that at the very time that Simeon was giving his prophecy concerning the life of Jesus, Anna came up. What a marvelous coincidence! (Someone told me that a coincidence is God's way of remaining anonymous.) Luke is much less specific concerning the message that the prophetess brought. This is surprising since he was so specific concerning the prophecy of Simeon.

This is what Luke said about the message of Anna:

She gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. Luke 2:38

I suspect that she said more than is recorded. Anna did two things:

1. She gave thanks to God.
2. She spoke about Jesus to the people who looked for Jerusalem's redemption.

The important thing about this is that she was the second to come up to Mary and Joseph with this message. Certainly Mary and Joseph were reminded of the fact that in the mouths of two or three witnesses a truth is verified. Apparently, Luke's inclusion of Anna's message was more an affirmation of the truth of Simeon's prophecy than an announcement of a different prophecy.

Verse 39 forms the conclusion of this paragraph. It contains a very important piece of information that is not found elsewhere. Notice what Luke said:

When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. Luke 2:39

Nothing is mentioned in the text about the location of Mary and Joseph since the birth of the child, Jesus. Now when the circumcision and purchasing of their firstborn were completed, Luke tells us that they returned to Nazareth. This is not as precise as one might wish. What was Luke saying? Was he saying that Mary and Joseph returned to Nazareth following the registration and then on the eighth day brought Jesus to the Jerusalem temple for circumcision? That does not seem reasonable. It was about a five-day walk back to Nazareth. It rather seems that Mary and Joseph stayed in Bethlehem, following the birth of Jesus, and then after the circumcision returned to their home in Nazareth.

We should remember that Luke tells us nothing of the trip into Egypt. This is not surprising at all. This piece of information was vital to the theme being pursued by Matthew, but not absolutely important to the theme pursued by Luke.

2:40-51 - Jesus Was Left Behind in the Temple

There is a gap of at least twelve silent years in the early life of Jesus. We have no reliable information about this time. Luke gives us a general summary of these years when he said,

And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. Luke 2:40

Luke's reference to the fact that Jesus "grew and became strong" is a way of referring to Jesus as being of responsible age. He now could be thought of as a man.

The home in which Jesus grew up was a place where the grace of God was known and counted upon. That is the kind of atmosphere Mary and Joseph cultivated for their family.

Along with giving us information about the experience being discussed in this paragraph, Luke also gives us an additional insight into the family life of Mary and Joseph.

Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. Luke 2:41

We must remember that this was a very poor family. It was quite costly, in terms of tolls and fees as well as the cost of food on the road, for such a family to travel five days each

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way to attend the Passover in Jerusalem each year. It was so important to them, however, that they made the trip anyway. This was a practice that Jesus continued in his adult life.

Now Luke singles out a particular Passover trip to share with us.

When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. Luke 2:42

The mention of the fact that Jesus was twelve years old is an indication of the fact that he now was considered a man and having had his bar-mitzvah. He was in a position to read from the law and share with the other men who shared a similar interest.

Luke gives us some information that would shock some parents.

After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Luke 2:43

Our first impulse might be one of severe shock. How could the parents not be aware of it? For some people in our culture, that would be impossible. It was not at all uncommon for people in that situation. Their system of child care was somewhat like what you find in the Asian cultures today. People tended to pay attention to children whether the children were their own or not. If someone else's child was near Mary and Joseph, they would oversee that child. The fact that it was not their child made no difference to Mary and Joseph or to the child. They had every reason to expect the same kind of family attention from everyone else in the caravan.

There was another reason that the parents might not know that Jesus was left behind. Luke has just mentioned the fact that Jesus was twelve years of age. A child of that age was considered an adult and would be expected to begin taking on responsibility for himself.

Luke continues to explain how such a dilemma might happen.

Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. Luke 2:44

For that time and culture, the thinking of Mary and Joseph was perfectly normal and responsible. It was not unusual for children to be by themselves for the day. When Jesus did not get back to his family at the end of a full day, they would know that something was amiss.

There were large numbers of people who traveled caravan-style as they returned to Galilee. The only way they could look for him was to comb the caravan family by family. Having done this, they realized that Jesus was not in the caravan at all. Luke describes it this way:

When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Luke 2:45,46

Having looked carefully through the caravan, they then looked for Jesus three more days in the city of Jerusalem. This means that the caravan had already reached Nazareth before they found Jesus. It is not at all surprising that they looked for three days in the city of Jerusalem. There were hundreds of places where he might have been. The text does not say so, but it seems that Mary and Joseph thought to look at the place in the temple where

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the teachers taught. This was also the place where Jesus Himself would later teach. Luke gives you a glimpse into the mind of Jesus. Notice what He was doing when Mary and Joseph found Him - He was "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions." It should be noted that He was sitting. This would make little difference in our culture, but it was very significant in the Jewish culture. A Rabbi sat when he taught. The fact that He was sitting might suggest that He was taking the part of a teacher. There was a natural yearning, in the mind of Jesus, for truth and understanding. Luke's words also point out that there was an exchange between Jesus and the teachers. This means that they were engrossed in what He was saying to them as well.

Luke gives us a glimpse into the responses of people who were present for these encounters.

Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. Luke 2:47

The source of their amazement was twofold:

1. They were amazed at his understanding. We must remember that he was only twelve years of age at this time. It would be a surprise that a young man of this age could grasp the implications of intense theological themes along with the greatest authorities on the Law in all Israel. It appears that Luke also implies that the depth of His understanding was a source of shock to those who listened.
2. They were amazed at his answers. Again, this young man was only twelve years of age. Jesus was not only able to grasp the things the teachers said, but the answers He gave to the Teachers of the Law were astonishing to the hearers because of the depth of understanding they represented.

There is something very natural about the family picture that you see in verse 48:

When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." Luke 2:48

There are three words in the Greek language which can be used to say "son" or "child." They are as follows:

1. Huios, υἱος- stresses the dignity and character of being a child in the noble family.
2. Teknon, τέκνον - stresses the fact of birth in the family.
3. Paidion, παιδίον little baby

Mary used the word 'teknon,' "tevknon" which stressed the fact that Jesus was her child; the one she loved so very much. Mary's words reveal only a portion of the fear and anxiety that she had struggled with throughout the four or five days of their search. There is also a trace of frustration and dissatisfaction in her question. She wanted to know why he had done such a thing to them. It is a way of expressing her feeling that He had not dealt appropriately with them.

Jesus did not answer His mother's question. In true Jewish fashion, He answered her question with a question. Look at how Luke quotes Jesus:

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"Why were you searching for me?" He asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" Luke 2:49

Some have felt that Jesus was being insensitive in His response to Mary. I do not read it that way. It seems an honest question. Jesus' awareness of Himself caused Him to wonder why they would be looking for Him; why wouldn't they expect Him to be here in the first place? A more literal translation of His response might be, "Why you sought me? Not know that in the things of the Father of me must be me?" The emphasis is not on the location of where they should have known to look for him, but that they should have known what would be occupying His attention. This causes me to wonder, did Mary share with Jesus the things the angel said to her? Did Joseph share with Jesus the things that the angel had said to him? The Scriptures are silent on the issue, but it would not be surprising if that were true. Granted it may be weak, but one should notice that there is a slight contrast between the words of Jesus and the words of Mary. She spoke of "your father," but Jesus spoke of "My Father." This was precisely the kind of contrast Jesus used years later when he told the parable of the prodigal son. The elder son spoke of "your son." The father spoke to the elder brother about "your brother."

Whatever the truth of this matter may be, Luke puts the whole conversation in perspective when he said,

But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Luke 2:50.

With all that the angel had said to both Mary and to Joseph, and with all the prophetic utterances of both Simeon and Anna, they were still unable to understand. It is easy to discover why they were not able to grasp what Jesus was saying. One need only think about one's own life a minute to realize that we too are often unable to understand what God is saying to us until we look back at the experience from some distance.

Again, Luke deals with the early life of Jesus in summary form when he said:

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. Luke 2:51

This might seem contradictory to Jesus' statement in 2:49 where He speaks like a man. It is not. Jesus was of age, by their calculations. We must also keep in mind, however, that in that culture the father of the house was in charge of the household as long as he lived. It was expected that even his adult children would be under his control until he died. Jesus was part of that culture; He knew the expectations and He lived up to them.

There is a strong contrast in verse 51. The two parts of the contrast are separated by the word "but." The first part of the contrast deals with Jesus. He went back to Nazareth and was obedient to Mary and Joseph. It is as though He forgot all about the episode in the Jerusalem temple. The last half of the contrast deals with Mary. While Jesus apparently put that experience out of His mind, Luke tells us that Mary "treasured all these things in her heart." The word "treasured" literally means to make careful arrangements. Mary arranged these memories in her mind in every possible way. She looked at these puzzling events in as many different ways as possible, trying to understand just what Jesus meant. Luke tells us that Mary treasured these things in her heart. It was not so much a mental pursuit as it was an emotional one. She went over these feelings again and again trying to figure out what was happening on that occasion.

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The final paragraph in the chapter is composed of one verse. In this verse, Luke continues his summary of the silent years of the life of Jesus. Luke said,

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.
Luke 2:52

This sentence includes both cause and effect. The cause has to do with growth in wisdom and stature. The effect is that He found favor with God and with the people around Him.

Wisdom and stature are two different realms. Wisdom has to do with personal, mental and emotional maturity. Stature, on the other hand, has a double intention: 1. This points to physical maturity. 2. It also points to the position Jesus held in the minds of the people around Him.

Conclusion

As you look back over this chapter, there is a sense of awe that God would work in such a marvelous and surprising way to express His love for sinful people, sending His Son into the world to take the place of sinners. This is a picture of God taking upon Himself all that makes us human, except sin, to forgive our sinfulness and make us like Himself. That is *love*. In telling the story of the early life of Jesus, Luke has carefully told us some exciting things about the love and mercy of God.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 5

LUKE 3:1 - 38

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

1. There are five paragraphs in Luke chapter three. On the chart below, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

3:1-14	
3:15-17	
3:18-20	
3:21, 22	
3:23-38	

2. In 3:1-14, Luke gives the names of seven civil and religious leaders.
- In what way would this be of help to the reader?
 - In 3:4-6, Luke quotes from Isaiah 40. What does he accomplish with this quotation?
 - In 3:7, 8, John preaches to those who came out to be baptized. Think of yourself as a member of his audience. Now read the words again. How would you feel when you heard these words? What was John trying to say to his hearers?
 - In 3:8, why does John warn these people about thinking of themselves as Abraham's children?
 - There is a prophetic message in 3:9. What is John trying to say to this Jewish audience?
 - In 3:11-14, John tells us something about his audience. What does he say? Matthew 3:7f.f. tells us that there were Scribes and Pharisees present. Luke gives no mention of this at all. Why might Luke omit this important information?
3. In 3:15-17, Luke deals with a reaction from the people.
- What were the people thinking about John?
 - How did John respond to their questioning?
 - What did John mean when he talked about the sandals?
 - John draws a contrast between baptizing with water and baptizing with the Holy Spirit. What difference does he make?
4. In 3:18-20, Luke tells the story of the imprisonment of John the Baptist.
- Why would John need to rebuke Herod concerning Herodias?
 - What does 3:20 tell you about Luke's reaction to the imprisonment of John the Baptist?
5. In 3:21, 22, Luke tells of the baptism of Jesus.
- Why would Jesus need to be baptized?

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- b. What is the significance of the Spirit coming on Jesus as a dove?
 - c. Did Luke hear God speak to Jesus? If not, how would he know what God said?
 - d. What does it mean that God said these things to Jesus?
6. In 3:23-38, Luke gives our most extensive genealogy of Jesus.
- a. In 5:1, Luke is very specific about dating this whole experience. In 3:23, Luke, when dealing with the same time frame, uses a very general time designation about the age of Jesus. In your mind, why would Luke do this?
 - b. What facts can you gather from this genealogy?
 - c. What purpose does this genealogy serve in the message that Luke is trying to convey to us?
 - d. Matthew 1:1-16 also gives us another genealogy of Jesus. Most people ignore genealogies in Bible study. There are some important truths to be found in these portions of God's word.
 - 1. Make observations about this genealogy.
 - 2. Do the two genealogies agree?
 - 3. Are the two genealogies the same?
 - 4. What message does Matthew's genealogy convey?
 - 5. What message does Luke's genealogy convey.
7. In your mind, review Luke chapter three.
- a. What does this chapter tell you about the ministry of Jesus?
 - b. What does this chapter tell you about Jesus' reflection of the presence of the Father?
8. What difference will this study make in your spiritual life?

LESSON 5 – LUKE 3:1-38

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

There are five paragraphs in this chapter:

3:1-14	John Preaches in the Wilderness
3:15-17	The People Wonder - Is John Messiah?
3:18-20	John Imprisoned by Herod Tetrarch of Galilee
3:21-22	The Baptism of Jesus
3:23-38	Genealogy of Jesus - 75 Generations - Mary

3:1-14 - John Preaches in the Wilderness

Until now, we have talked in general terms about dates. At this point, Luke becomes much more specific. There is general agreement concerning the dating of the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar - when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Ityurea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene - during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. Luke 3:1-2

The dating of this event, which is obviously very important to Luke, can be traced from seven different perspectives. One of these is specific and the other six are in general terms. Tiberias, the second Roman emperor, reigned from 14 A.D. to 37 A.D. If the word of God came to John in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, then it was in 29 A.D. These are historical details which can be checked against historical records. Luke was writing about chronological landmarks which were familiar to most people.

In this record, Luke refers to the high priesthood of both Annas and Caiaphas. These two men did not hold the office simultaneously. Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas. Annas held the office of High Priest before the time that Caiaphas was appointed to the position. Annas was appointed to the position by Quirinius, the governor of Syria. Caiaphas, on the other hand was appointed to the position by Valarius Gratus. Luke mentions the two together. We cannot be certain of Luke's motives in this instance. One possibility is that though Caiaphas was the High Priest, Annas still held a great deal of power. He may have still been the presiding officer of the Sanheddrin at this time. There is no way to confirm or deny this possibility.

We get the impression that John had a single place where he went to preach and the people came to him there. That is not quite accurate. Notice how Luke reports the situation:

He (John) went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Luke 3:3

John became known as a preacher through several means, but the first of these was that he went all over the area around the Jordan preaching wherever people would listen. The message that he preached was one of repentance to find forgiveness from sin.

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Luke appeals to the Old Testament as indisputable evidence that John was performing a godly ministry. The appeal to the prophecy of Isaiah has two advantages:

1. Isaiah's prophecy was well known to the people of Israel and would never be questioned by them.
2. The message in Isaiah perfectly identifies what John the Baptist was doing in the desert. Luke quoted from a Messianic passage in Isaiah when he wrote,

A voice of one calling in the desert, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God's salvation." Luke 3:4b-6

This is a picture that the people of that day would understand quite well. Whenever a ruler was about to travel, he sent a courier to every place through which he was going. The area would be cleaned up and the roads repaired. Great effort was expended to make the roads as straight as possible. This lessened the possibility of ambush. Many people would be employed to make the road level so that there would not be too much discomfort for the king in the ascents and descents. Again, every effort was made to keep the roads as smooth as possible for the comfort of the king. Luke was drawing a parallel between the couriers of a king and the ministry of John the Baptist and the coming of the Messiah. This is Luke's way of laying the groundwork for his report of the ministry of John the Baptist as he prepares for the ministry of Jesus. Notice, Luke begins the quotation as it describes the work of a courier, but ends the quotation at a point where Isaiah is describing the salvation of mankind.

It would be easy to misunderstand what Luke was referring to when he talked about the people who came to hear John.

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, ... Luke 3:7a

Baptism had two functions in that day. If a person wanted to forsake his pagan way of life and identify with the Jewish worship, he must first be baptized. It was a symbol of the cleansing from his former way of sinful living and an indication that he intended to worship Jehovah from this point forward. The people who had come to be baptized were confessing that they had not been worshiping Jehovah although most of these people were probably Jews. They wanted to be forgiven and change their ways. We will discuss the second function shortly.

John the Baptist was not the modern, smooth-talking minister. He seemed abrupt and harsh. We must remember, however, that he was ministering to people who had severely forsaken God and were deeply involved in a tragic, disobedient lifestyle. John said to them,

"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham." Luke 3:7b-8

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

We do not know why, but Matthew 3:7 suggests that there were many Pharisees and Sadducees who came to the baptism. It appears that Luke wants to stress the fact that John is ministering to all the people. This is an important theme in the Gospel of Luke.

Put yourself in the place of John the Baptist for a moment. As you say these words, what kind of emotions would you experience? Why would he call them a "brood of vipers?" It is possible that John called them "brood of vipers" because the bite of a baby viper was far more concentrated and dangerous than that of a more mature snake.

John's accusation is strong. Though his words were strong, they were very precise.

*You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?
Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. Luke 3:7b, 8a*

John was not wishing that they had not come to be forgiven. He was saying that it will take more than going into the water to be baptized to clean up their lives. It was important to suggest to the whole community that they intend to live a new and different life. John is going one step farther and insisting that they live a changed life as the best symbol that their lives are different.

John knew his audience. He immediately dealt with a response that he knew they would think about or even use with him.

*And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,'
for I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for
Abraham. Luke 3:8b*

Jewish people were prone to lean heavily upon the fact that they were children of Abraham. John the Baptizer was simply saying that they should not think that the fact that they were descendants of Abraham would make any difference in their punishment for wrongdoing. John's statement about the fact that God can raise children for Abraham out of the stones is intended to suggest just how meaningless this is in terms of the judgment that they deserve because of their disobedience.

John continued with his prophetic announcement.

*"The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not
produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." Luke 3:9*

There are two word pictures in this verse that the listeners would understand very well. The metaphor of the ax is a way to stress the fact that judgment is already in process. When an ax is used on a tree, it will be destroyed. The second word picture has to do with a tree that does not bear fruit. Good land was very precious and difficult to find in this little country. Keepers of vineyards and orchards had to watch their trees very carefully. Any tree that did not bear fruit was given special care. If this care did not change the situation, the tree was immediately cut down and replaced with another that could bear fruit. There was no room for a non-productive tree. John used the same figure concerning the lives of people. If we do not produce the fruit of righteousness, then we can count on the fact that our lives, like the unproductive tree, will be destroyed because of their uselessness. The image of being burned in the fire is another image of judgment which will surely come to the unproductive.

*The people listened to John with great care. As he finished, they cried out,
"What should we do then?" The crowd asked. Luke 3:10*

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They were acknowledging that John had accurately described their life and they were now dealing with the results of their waywardness. Their only cry was not one of defense, but a plea to find out what to do to be saved from the judgment they deserve.

In 3:11-14, John gave a series of instructions which may well have suggested the makeup of the crowd who had come to listen to him:

John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same." Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?" "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them. Then the soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely - be content with your pay." Luke 3:11-14

This section suggests that the audience was made up of at least three groups: people in general, tax collectors and soldiers. The later two groups were despised by everyone in the realm. John told the average citizen who had come to find cleansing that they should evidence their repentance by sharing with those who were much less fortunate than themselves. He suggested this in two forms: Those who had extra clothing and those who had more food than they needed. John told the tax collectors not to extort taxes, but levy the tax that was appropriate. If there were Pharisees there, they would have been furious. They were absolutely convinced that tax collectors were both traitors and blasphemers and as such were unredeemable. John appealed to the whosoever and urged them to repent and change their lifestyle because God would forgive even the tax collector. The change that John mentioned was that they should be honest in their levy of taxes because the honest tax still allowed them a good living.

Another outcast group, the soldiers, also asked what they could do to be right with God. This was significant because every Jew seemed to hate the Roman soldiers. Add to this the fact that many, if not most, of the Roman soldiers in Palestine were conscripts from Samaria; these conscripts were required to give allegiance to the emperor. This was done by placing incense upon an altar fire before a statue of the emperor. Now you can see several reasons for the Jews to think that the soldiers were unredeemable. John, however, simply ignored the fact that they were political outcasts and assumed that they were redeemable. He urged them to do three things:

1. Don't extort money. This was because the soldiers were well known for doing just that. John was telling them that this had to cease.
2. Do not accuse people falsely. When the animosity between the Romans and Jews was as strong as it was, the Jews took particular delight in doing things against the Romans and getting away with it. This was a frustration to Roman authorities. To get around this, soldiers often made false accusation because they knew that someone had done the wrong, but it was not immediately clear who had done it. They needed a guilty party and one Jew was as good as another for this purpose.
3. Be content with your pay. Soldiers were not in the service of Rome out of national pride, but out of desire for money. They were employees, not nationalists. When the Roman officials did not give them enough they found other ways to increase their income. John was saying that greed was an invalid motivation for life and work.

3:15-17 - People Wondered - Is John the Messiah?

Obviously John the Baptist had made a great impression on the people. For people who are desperately tired of Roman oppression, it is easy for them to wonder if anyone who spoke on their behalf was the coming Messiah. Whatever the reason, the people had begun to wonder if it was possible that John was the Christ, the anointed Messiah, the one for whom they watched.

John was aware of this possibility and took steps to divert that kind of attention away from himself.

John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Luke 3:16

In this part of the statement, John included several pieces of information:

1. John baptizes with water, the Messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit. The meaning of this lopsided contrast was that John's ministry was intended to deal with the sins of the past, but not the changing of the life. The ministry of the one who would come after him would not only bring forgiveness, but would also initiate a transformation of the life by the ministry of the Holy Spirit within the believer.
2. The one for whom John is the herald is more powerful than he is. The word for more powerful is a comparative term. It describes one who has strength which surpasses that of another.
3. This one is coming. The person is not present at this time. This carried strong implications for the Jewish people. They thought of the Messiah in terms of one who was coming.
4. The coming one was very important. John used a household picture that they would all understand. In any wealthy household the person who answered the door, removed the sandals of guests and washed their feet was considered the lowest slave in the household. John used this picture to suggest that the Messiah who was coming was so important that John, though he was of the house of Levi, was not worthy to remove the sandals from the feet of the Messiah.
5. He will baptize with the Holy Spirit. I mentioned earlier, there were two functions for baptism. The second function was that of preparation for service. Baptism, as we know it, comes from the washing through which the priests would go when they were preparing to begin their turn at the altar. John said that the coming one would baptize with the Holy Spirit. He will prepare you for service by the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit. This statement was immediately followed with the words, "and with fire." People tend to look upon "the Holy Spirit and with fire" as two separate things. In the Greek text, that cannot be true. John is saying that the Holy Spirit's preparation for ministry, which the coming one will bring, is to have the effect of fire in the person's life.

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6. He will pass judgment. John turns to a word picture from the farm which every person in his audience would completely understand. At harvest time, the farmer must do two things:
 - a. He must separate the wheat from the chaff. This was done by using the winnowing fork. The grain was tossed up into the air so that the wind could blow away the very light hulls or chaff. Thus, the part that fell back to the pile was clean grain. This was done repeatedly until all the chaff was separated from the grain. When this had been accomplished, the grain was properly stored.
 - b. So as not to have a mess around the field, the farmer would gather the chaff, which had been separated from the grain, and burn it up. It would be completely consumed. This was a picture which was commonly used to depict severe judgment. John expressed this in very strong terms:

His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn. He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Luke 3: 17

It is a way of stressing the fact that no expression of evil will escape His judgment.

3:18-20 John Imprisoned by Herod the Tetrarch

Luke was not trying to give a complete report of John's sermon, but just convey some flavor of what he was preaching. Luke summarized the other things that John said in these terms.

And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them. Luke 3:18

We must not get the wrong impression. John did speak in forceful terms, but it was not all haranguing judgment. Luke stresses the fact that John was also preaching the good news of forgiveness and redemption.

Luke includes an important piece of information which seemed like an afterthought. It was not. Part of what John the Baptist preached was a prophetic pronouncement against the moral activities of the Tetrarch of the land. Such attacks tended to be very costly personally, but that did not deter John the Baptist from taking a stand against the moral impurity of their current ruler.

Herodias was an ambitious woman. Her first husband was Herod Philip I. He was her uncle, but he never ruled. Herodias divorced him and married a second uncle, Herod Antipas. It was this evil union that John the Baptist attacked in his preaching. This is what Luke referred to when he said,

But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in Jail. Luke 3:19,20

The Law of Moses strictly forbade the marriage of a brother's wife. John the Baptist wasted no time in pointing out the evil of what the ruler had done. Luke does not go into detail at this point, but Mark 6:17-20 gives a thorough description of the animosity Herodias held for John the Baptist. Herod Antipas was not a good man, but this act of

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putting John in prison and then beheading him was masterminded by his illegitimate wife - Herodias. This was politically an unfortunate move by Herod because John the Baptist was greatly loved by the people. It was taken as a personal affront to them.

3:21,22 - The Baptism of Jesus

We do not know when Jesus came to the place where John was baptizing the people. Luke just suddenly announces that Jesus was baptized also.

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove and a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Luke 3:21,22

This account of the baptism of Jesus is very brief. Matthew gives a fuller account of this experience.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. Matthew 3:13-15

Did you ever wonder why Jesus needed to be baptized? Certainly, he was not guilty of any sin. The other people who were being baptized were doing so as a confession of what their lives had been like and a desire to live for God. This was not true for Jesus.

You may remember that previously we mentioned the two functions for baptism. The first was cleansing from sin. If a Gentile decided to follow the Jewish religion, it was required that he be baptized. The second function for baptism was the preparation for service. Jesus was correct when He told John that he needed to be baptized. It was not for cleansing of His sin, but in preparation for His service to the Father.

In that day, when the High Priest was about to go into the Holy of Holies to take the sacrifice for the sins of the people, he had to wash (baptidzo) and change his clothing. Jesus was saying to John, before I can begin this ministry of providing the eternal sacrifice for the sins of all humanity, I must go through the washing that every High Priest performs when he is about to enter the Holy of Holies.

Luke continued with the account, saying,

And the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove... Luke 3:22b

Other High Priests, when they were about to enter the Holy of Holies, were to change their clothing for a clean, pure garment. As Jesus came out of the waters of baptism, each Biblical account indicates that the Holy Spirit came upon Him. Jesus' preparation for His ministry of redemption was not a pure robe, but the presence and power of the Holy Spirit working through His life.

There is consensus that Luke was not present when Jesus was baptized. Later, when Luke was obviously a part of the Christian community, John the Baptist was already dead. Someone else had to share this information with him. However, he came by this information, it is in agreement with the other accounts. He said,

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And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Luke 3:22b

Notice that the communication is a personal one. It is addressed to "You" in the singular. We can guess that it is possible that no one else was aware of the conversation between the Father and His Son, Jesus. In this communication, the Father gave three pieces of information:

1. He claimed Jesus as His Son. This places Jesus in the realm of deity. The Gospel records are repeatedly acknowledging in a host of ways that Jesus was indeed God.
2. He affirmed that He loved Jesus
3. He affirmed that He was well pleased with Jesus.

3:23-38 - The Genealogy of Jesus

Luke begins his listing of the genealogy of Jesus in an interesting way.

Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry... Luke 3:23

Luke could pinpoint the precise year in which John the Baptist began his ministry. Now we come to the beginning of the ministry of Jesus and Luke turns to a very general time designation, "about thirty years old." I have absolutely no doubt that Luke could pinpoint the age of Jesus precisely had he wished to do so. It appears that he had something else in mind. We must remember that Jesus, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews, is a High Priest. Priests began their ministry when they were thirty years of age. It is possible that Luke, knowing this parallel, was identifying Jesus as a priest and giving His general age simultaneously. We cannot be certain of that fact, but it bears consideration.

Notice how carefully Luke wrote,

He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph... Luke 3:23b

Luke knew that Jesus was not the son of Joseph, but he needed to suggest that there were many who thought of Him in that light. This, of course, led Luke into a description of the genealogy of Jesus. Both Matthew and Luke give major genealogies concerning the lineage of Jesus. We must recognize that there are some differences in the two accounts. Notice that Matthew (1:1-16) begins with the ancient, Abraham, and moves to the present - Jesus. Luke, on the other hand, begins with the present, Jesus, and moves toward the ancient, Adam. It should also be noted that Matthew traces the lineage only to Abraham while Luke traces the lineage to Adam. The reason for this fact is to be found in the purpose for which the two men wrote. It appears that Matthew traces the lineage to Abraham to identify Jesus with His Jewish lineage. Luke appears to trace the lineage to Adam to identify Jesus with all humanity, for the book of Luke purports to be written not to Jews, but to Gentiles.

We must admit that we cannot accurately account for the differences in the writings of Matthew and Luke. This indicates that we do not understand; it does not mean that there are inaccuracies in either account.

Notice that Luke says,

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He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the Son of Levi, the son of Melki, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph... Luke 3:24

If you check on the people listed in this verse, they are in the lineage of Mary, not Joseph. Luke describes it in this fashion because in that day one could only trace the lineage of a Jewish person through his father.

Matthew lists 41 members of the Genealogy of Joseph between Abraham and Joseph while Luke lists 54 members of the genealogy of Mary also going back to Abraham. Remember, these authors are tracing different people and the names would not necessarily be the same.

Notice that having traced the lineage back to Adam, Luke goes one step farther and lists "the son of God." It is appropriate to gather from this fact that Luke is saying that mankind came from God and through that lineage He brought His Son, our redeemer into the world.

We will not give a lengthy description of each member of Mary's lineage because several of them, except for their name, and their placement in the genealogy, are unknown.

Conclusion

Whenever I contemplate just how difficult it was for Jesus, I am reminded of the fact that in every generation since Abraham's trek around the fertile crescent, God was designing the lineage through which each person in the lineage would be a vital part of this glorious experience.

God is like that. As He lead in the lives of 75 generations of people so that the Son of God would be born in just the right place, at the right time and to the right people, so He is watching over every minute detail of your life and mine. Luke purposes to show us who God is in Jesus Christ. One thing which characterizes His nature is that He could design life to provide meaning and purpose. When the experiences of life are in disarray, I need to remember that God is not only in control, but everything we need will come from His hand.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 6

LUKE 4:1-44

AFTER THE TEMPTATION; JESUS TAUGHT AND HEALED

1. There are seven paragraphs in the Greek text of chapter four. On the chart below, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

4: 1-13	
4:14-15	
4:16-30	
4:31-37	
4:38-39	
4:40-41	
4:42-44	

2. In 4:1-13, there is a contrast between Jesus and Satan.
- Make two lists:
 - What does this paragraph say about Jesus?
 - What does this paragraph say about Satan?
 - Study these lists:
 - What did you learn about the relationship between Jesus and Satan?
 - What does this tell us about our lives?
 - Luke said that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. Why was that necessary?
 - What difference did it make that Jesus ate nothing for these 40 days?
 - List the different means the devil used to tempt Jesus. What does this tell us about our own temptation?
 - What do the different forms of temptation tell you about the character of Satan?
3. In 4:14,15, Jesus was invited to speak, as a visiting Rabbi, in many of the Galilee synagogues. How can we account for this when He had no formal training as a Rabbi?
4. Luke 4:16-30 records Jesus' preaching opportunity in Nazareth.
- What is the significance of the fact that Jesus was to read from the passage in Isaiah?
 - In 4:16-19, Luke records some of the text Jesus read. Meditate on these verses for a while. What do they tell you about Jesus?
 - Why was the reference to "anointed" so important?
 - In His sermon, what claim did Jesus make about Himself?
 - In 4:23-27, Jesus uses two illustrations: 1. The widow of Zerahath. 2. The story of Naaman from Syria. What point did He illustrate with these references?

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- f. How did Jesus' former neighbors react to Jesus' use of these illustrations? Why?
- 5. In 4:31-37, Luke describes Jesus' healing of the demoniac at Capernaum.
 - a. Contrast this experience with that in Nazareth.
 - b. What difference would it make that Jesus was teaching on the Sabbath?
 - c. Reflect on 4:32. In what way did Jesus' teaching differ from the Rabbi's teaching in terms of "authority"?
 - d. In 4:35, Jesus responds to the demon's outburst. Why would Jesus sternly command the demon to be quiet and come out of the man?
 - e. In 4:34, 35, there is a contrast between Jesus and the demon.
 - 1. Make a list of what Luke tells us here about Jesus.
 - 2. Make a list of what Luke tells us here about the demon.
 - 3. What new insights has this search provided for you?
 - f. In 4:36, 37, Luke reports the responses of people to the miracle Jesus performed.
 - 1. What was the response of the people?
 - 2. What effect did this have upon Jesus' ministry?
- 6. In 4:38, 39, Luke tells of Jesus' healing of Peter's mother-in-law.
 - a. Why does Luke stress the fact that this is Peter's mother-in-law?
 - b. What miracles happened as a result of Jesus' efforts?
- 7. In 4:40, 41, Luke tells of many other healing miracles of Jesus.
 - a. In 4:40, Luke tells us the sun was setting. What difference would that make?
 - b. Luke tells us Jesus placed His hands on each sick person. Why would this be important?
 - c. In 4:41, Jesus rebuked the demons, as they came out of people, and refused to allow them to speak. Why would Jesus not want His enemies to affirm that He was indeed the Son of God?
- 8. In 4:42, 43, the people prevailed upon Jesus to remain with them. Why would they want Jesus to stay with them when they know that He must preach elsewhere as well?
- 9. Reflect upon your study of chapter four. How will you view your own spiritual journey differently because of what you have seen in this chapter?

LESSON 6 – LUKE 4:1-44

AFTER THE TEMPTATION, JESUS TAUGHT AND HEALED

There are seven paragraphs in Luke chapter four. They are as follows:

4:1-13	The Temptation of Jesus
4:14-15	Jesus Taught in Galilee Synagogues
4:16-30	Jesus Preaches in Nazareth - Thrown Out
4:31-37	Jesus Healed Demoniac at Capernaum
4:38, 39	Jesus Healed Peter's Mother-in-law
4:40, 41	Jesus Healed Many and Drove Out Demons
4:42-44	People Seek to Detain Jesus

It is clear from this chart that the beginning portion of Jesus' ministry was focused on teaching and healing.

4:1-13 - The Temptation of Jesus

Take a moment and overview 4:1-13. You will notice that there is some important information about Jesus and the Father in these verses. Because of the adversarial situation, there is also a lot of information about Satan in these sentences as well.

As you scan this paragraph it will become obvious that there is a strong contrast between Jesus and Satan. The contrast describes who Jesus is and who Satan is. It describes how powerful Jesus is and how powerful Satan is. Everything that we see in this paragraph must be viewed against this background.

Luke begins the account of the temptation by describing Jesus' preparation for that experience.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert... Luke 4:1

The word "full" literally means to be full to the point of overflowing. As we mentioned earlier, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus for the enabling of service. A part of that enabling was the strengthening against the temptation of the evil one. Jesus preparation for the struggle against the evil one was the overflowing presence of the Holy Spirit.

As you reflect upon verse one, you wonder just why the Spirit led Jesus into the place where temptation was to be His constant companion. The Gospel records contain many pieces of information. One of the most important pieces is the information that is contained about who Jesus is. At the outset of His ministry, there must be a demonstration of the fact that He is God and more powerful than the enemy that challenges His authority. The person and position of Jesus is open to question until Jesus demonstrates His superior power and purity.

Notice how Luke sets the stage for the temptation of Jesus.

...And was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. Luke 4:1b, 2

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Luke shows clearly that it was the activity of the Spirit to lead Jesus into the desert where He would be tempted. This was not an expression of brutality or masochism. There was no doubt about the outcome of the temptation. The purpose of the temptation, from the standpoint of the Holy Spirit, was to demonstrate the fact that the power of Jesus was greater than the power of Satan. We sometimes take this truth too lightly. Jesus is always greater than the enemy who challenges Him.

The fact that this temptation was to last for 40 days deals with the fact that it was not just a whim confrontation. This was a time of extensive encounter where there was plenty of time for the enemy to show that he was greater than Jesus, as he sometimes claims. The problem developed, for Satan, because he could not prove that assertion to be true.

In the last sentence, in 4:2, there is additional information which makes it clear that this was a prolonged encounter between God and Satan. In the first half of the sentence, Luke tells us that Jesus had nothing to eat during the 40 day period. Luke followed this by adding that at the end of the time Jesus was very hungry.

In Luke 4:3, Luke describes something of the character and approach of Satan.

The devil said to him, "IF you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Luke 4:3

Satan does two unfortunate things in this sentence. Notice that his attack begins with the word "if." Satan knows that Jesus is the Son of God. Satan attacks Jesus by questioning if in fact He really is the Son of God. It is an attempt to at least sow doubt in the mind of Jesus. The question is subtle, but none the less devastating.

The second unfortunate thing Satan did was to usurp authority. In the verse just quoted, note that Satan assumed the authority and set the criteria which would or would not determine whether Jesus was the Son of God. That authority belongs exclusively to God.

In 4:3, Satan insisted that Jesus show a sign that He was the Son of God. The sign was a miracle: command a stone to be made into bread. This, in fact, would be a miracle, but not a necessary one. Life, for everyone, could go on indefinitely if that stone remained a stone. It was a casual demand. Jesus had the ability to turn the stone into bread if that had been His desire. The problem with the demand of Satan was that he insisted upon a demonstration, a sign, that Jesus was the Son of God. This removes the necessity for faith. This request was repeated often by the Pharisees, and it was always refused.

In 4:4, Jesus responded to Satan's demand. Jesus did not argue the point at all. He simply quoted Scripture to Satan. Jesus said,

...It is written, "Man does not live on bread alone." Luke 4:4

This is a quotation from Deuteronomy 8:3. Notice, however, that the simple quotation of Scripture was sufficient. There was neither further argument or questioning on the subject from Satan. It was clear to him that he had lost that encounter.

It should be noted, from 4:5, that defeat does not discourage Satan. He immediately devised a different attack.

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to

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anyone I want to. so if you will worship me it will all be yours."
Luke 4:5-8

In these brief verses, there are several insights into the character and direction of Satan. As you look through the verses above you will notice, at least, these indications:

1. He has some power - he showed Jesus all kingdoms in an instant.
2. He is dishonest - he claimed he could give Jesus authority and splendor. He had none of this to give. This authority belonged to God alone.
3. He lied again - he said authority had been given to him. That is not true.
4. He lied a third time - he said he could give it to anyone he wanted to. The truth is that he had no authority in the first place.
5. His real motive - he wanted Jesus to worship him. He still had a desire to be God.
6. He lied a fourth time - he promised Jesus that all this would be His. Satan had nothing that he could give and Jesus was heir to all of it in the first place.
7. He is subtle - he was promising to give Jesus something for which Jesus was already heir.
8. He is subtle - there is absolutely nothing wrong with power, possessions or position.

Look over this list. Satan's basic motive is selfish. He takes rather than gives. For Satan, the end justifies the means. It is quite alright to lie or deceive in order to achieve his goals.

This is a formidable offer, if taken on face value. Jesus, because He was as human as we are, could be appealed to by these desirable things. There was a real encounter between the forces of God and the forces of evil at this point. Notice, however, how Jesus responded to the offer.

1. There is no argument at all.
2. There is no discussion concerning what Jesus knew was the usurping of authority and lying deception.
3. Jesus simply quoted Scripture again. Some of His favorite words were, "it is written." Jesus' statement comes from Deuteronomy six. He did not explain it or expand upon the quotation. He simply stated the truth of the passage.

Notice that there is no response from Satan between 4:8 and 4:9. It is obvious that he had lost again. He could not counter what Jesus was saying, so he went on to other temptations.

It appears, in 4:9, that this happened immediately. That is probably not the case. The entire temptation experience took place over a period of 40 days. There was probably some time elapsed between the two verses.

The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God, " he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you

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to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Luke 4:9-11

Notice, in this temptation, that the basic issue at stake is exactly the same as that which had been pursued previously: whether or not Jesus was the Son of God. Having failed at other types of temptation, Satan now appealed to Scripture. He used Scripture in an attempt to cause Jesus to stumble and sin. The quotation is from Psalm 91:11, 12. If you study this Psalm carefully, you will note that the word "you" is directed toward the person who follows God, not exclusively the Son of God. There is a subtle attack here. If Jesus followed instructions and threw himself down, the issue that would then be in question would not be His Sonship, but whether God was indeed God.

Jesus' reply is exactly as it had been before. Notice that he did not choose a passage that refuted Satan's choice, but rather one that dealt with his motive in the temptation. Jesus answered,

"It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Luke 4:12

In this instance, Jesus is quoting directly from Deuteronomy 6:16. The names for God in Jesus' quotation are taken directly from the Hebrew text. Notice Jesus said, the Lord your God". In the Hebrew it is "Jehovah your eloheychem." Jehovah means - the all-powerful, eternal God who emphasizes **mercy**. The name "Eloheychem" emphasizes the **judgment** of God. Jesus is stressing the idea that Satan should not put God, the merciful eternal judge, to the test. Jesus is stressing the Deity of God while Satan is challenging it.

Notice that there was no response from Satan to Jesus attack. Again, this is evidence that Satan attempted to cause Jesus to stumble and failed.

Verse 13 is a very simple statement, but its meaning is tremendously important. Luke said,

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. Luke 4:13

In this simple sentence there are two very important truths:

1. Satan was defeated. He walked away from Jesus. Had he been successful, he would have taken Jesus with him. The fact that he walked away was his admission of defeat.
2. He was not finished tempting Jesus. Some people think that Jesus was tempted during a 40 day period and that was the end of it. That is not the case. When Luke said, "he left him until an opportune time" he was saying that the devil was simply waiting for the next opportunity.

We need to be reminded that the tactics of the devil do not change. What he did with Jesus he continues to do today. This should help us to deal with our own temptation at his hands.

4:14-15 - Jesus Taught in Galilee Synagogues

This brief paragraph is an important summary statement. Luke wrote in such a way that he gave several significant pieces of information:

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Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. Luke 4:14, 15

The return to Galilee takes only a phrase in Luke's report, but it was a walk of three to five days. We could wish that we knew what happened; what Jesus said during that time. Whatever happened, Jesus was being guided by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is an indication that the service was continuing. We are not certain what Luke meant when he said that Jesus' "fame spread through the whole countryside." We know of no miracles that had happened prior to this time. There is no record of any astonishing teachings or claims that Jesus had performed on the way. The only clue to this statement comes from the fact that John had made some astounding statements about Jesus prior to the baptism. John's remarks would make it clear that he believed that this was in fact the Messiah for which all Israel had been waiting. That, in itself, would be enough for Jesus' fame to spread throughout all Galilee.

Luke also tells us that Jesus was a teacher in the synagogues of the area. This is interesting. They did not have the kind of restrictions that many denominations now have concerning the pulpit. A recognized teacher could be invited to teach because the Rabbi thought it would be good for all to hear him. This may, in fact, have been the motivation. Somehow, we must come to grips with the question of how Jesus came to be known as a teacher. People of the area knew Him. They knew that He had not attended Rabbinical training. Still, He was given the privileges of a travelling Rabbi. Does this mean that He had already chosen some disciples? Does it mean that he was teaching, in search for appropriate disciples. The text is silent on this issue. We are only certain that surprisingly, Jesus was invited to speak as a visiting Rabbi would be.

The result of this invitation was that Jesus was being praised by all who heard Him. This had to be a source of great consternation to the Rabbi at each synagogue where He taught. This was happening in all the small towns and villages around Galilee.

4:16-30 - Jesus Preaches in Nazareth - Thrown Out

This paragraph records a very emotional, painful experience of Jesus. It is as though Jesus knew exactly what the people would do, but preached His message anyway. Notice how Luke tells the story:

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Luke 4:16-19

In 4:16, Luke tells us a little about Jesus' personal life. Luke speaks of the place where Jesus "had been brought up..." The word for "brought up" is one of 36 words which are translated "bring" in English. It literally means "to thicken", "to nourish", "to pamper", "to educate", "to bring up". Knowing what else Luke wrote about Jesus, it is interesting that he spoke so humanly of His early years. Luke had an exceptional grasp of what it

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meant to be human and divine. He expressed it crisply in these early chapters of the Gospel he wrote.

Luke tells us something of the earlier life of Jesus when he said, "on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, **as was his custom.**" Before He began His ministry, He regularly attended the local services of worship at the synagogue. It tells us something about the home from which He came and the kind of man He was. Not every Jewish man regularly attended Sabbath worship, but Jesus did.

In every synagogue there are a group of men who are looked to for the weekly reading of the Torah. These people are the best readers; the regular attenders and usually the ones for whom it has the greatest meaning. From the wording of this paragraph it is clear that Jesus was one of those men.

In 4:16, 17, Jesus is viewed, by the leadership of the Nazareth synagogue in two different ways:

1. They saw Him as one of the dependable ones to whom they had often turned for the counting of Minyan¹ and the necessary help to conduct the weekly Torah readings. When Jesus stood up to read, it was one of the faithful who had often read and has now returned and will read again.

There is an additional piece of information found in the words:

Unrolling it he found the place where it was written. Luke 4:17b

There are a number of people in most every synagogue who can read Hebrew, but if handed a closed scroll could not find the place from which the reading was to be taken. Luke's statement tells us that Jesus knew the Hebrew very well. He was very comfortable reading from the Torah scroll.

Jesus read the beautiful, prophetic words from Isaiah 61:1-2a. We are not sure if Jesus gave an appended version, or if Luke did so, or a later scribe, but the opening of this quotation from the Hebrew text of Isaiah 61:1 is not a word for word quote. Notice the difference between the two:

The Spirit of the sovereign (Adonai) Lord (Jehovah) is... Isaiah 61:1

The Spirit of the Lord is on me... Luke 4:18

The Hebrew form is much stronger than the words Luke wrote. We must remember that it may be that Jesus spoke the very words that Luke recorded. We can not be sure. The Isaiah 61 statement speaks of "Adonai". This name for God is the more common name. In Torah readings, it is often substituted for the name "Jehovah" which was so holy the Jewish people would not speak it except on the day of atonement, in the temple. Adonai identified the one who was their master, the controller of their lives.

This entire quotation was identified, in the minds of Jewish people, with the celebration of the Year of Jubilee. The Year of Jubilee was supposed to be celebrated every fifty years. It was supposed to take effect 50 years after Israel completed the takeover of the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. Israel never really

¹. "Minyan" was the number of Jewish men present required before services could be conducted. Today the number is usually 10, but at some times and places it has been as low as six.

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completed that takeover and to the best of our knowledge, the Year of Jubilee was never celebrated. Jubilee was a Biblical festival with stated rules to govern its observance. There were three basic requirements:

1. They were not to sow or to reap during the year of Jubilee.
2. All property which had been sold because of poverty was to be returned to the designated owners during this year. This was just one way for Israel to deal with the commandment that they were to have no poor among them.
3. There was to be freedom for all Jews who because of poverty had sold themselves as slaves during the previous 50 years. This too was one way to deal with the issue of poverty in Israel.

Jubilee was a time of freedom and restoration for all who suffered in Israel. Because it was never really observed, the Jewish people clung to the hope that when Messiah came, He would bring about their first Jubilee and lead them into freedom and prosperity. On a regular basis this passage, that Jesus read, was used to remind Israel that Messiah would come and lead them into Jubilee.

Then as now, there were prescribed readings for each Sabbath day among the Jews. The readings might not be in exactly the same order as they are now, but they were prescribed to enable them to read the law from one end to the other during the year. It is most interesting that this reading came at the time that Jesus was to preach the very first sermon of His active ministry.

This is the first record of Jesus' preaching. What an exciting passage with which to begin one's ministry! It should be noted what He had on His mind on that occasion:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. Luke 4:18a

There are a couple of things in this portion of the sentence that should receive our attention:

1. The word translated "because" is "therefore" in the Greek text. This makes a change in the meaning. If you use the word "because", the meaning is that the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus because He had been appointed to preach. If you use the word "therefore", it means that the Spirit of God had come upon him for a specific service to God, therefore the Father anointed him to preach the Gospel. In 4:18,19, the people would be reminded that this passage was read and thought of in relation to the Messiah's identification with the Year of Jubilee.
2. Jesus gave a very important message about Himself which every Jewish person present would understand. Jesus said, "...he **anointed me** to preach good tidings to the poor..." In His first recorded sermon or teaching, Jesus was claiming to be the anointed one; the Messiah. While He was reading, that would not have angered the people, but it would later.

This was a passage the Jewish people loved to hear. It had great meaning and hope for them. They were convinced that the Messiah would lead them in the first celebration of the Year of Jubilee.

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Jesus was proclaiming that His position as the Anointed One was a mission to release those who were taken captive or made themselves captive in order to deal with their financial situation. It was a commission to bring healing to those who were suffering and freedom to those who were crushed by cruel oppression.

Jesus closed by the use of the words:

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Luke 4:19

These words were associated with the Year of Jubilee as described in Leviticus 25.

As we said earlier, up until this time, Jesus would have been seen as one of the faithful of the synagogue who could be counted on to do the readings. Upon completing the reading, Jesus then took on a different role and everyone understood the difference.

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down.

The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him,... Luke 4:20

Preaching was not done from a standing position, as we do today, but the preacher/Rabbi would take his seat as a signal that he was going to preach. There was a special chair in every synagogue just for this purpose. It is a bit similar to the Bishop's chair in the cathedral from which he makes pronouncements. When Jesus sat down in that chair, he was no longer just one of the faithful, he was now being treated as a visiting Rabbi and his message would be considered for its ability to teach those who heard. Notice that Luke said that "the eyes of everyone were fastened on him."

Certainly verse 21 is not the entire sermon that Jesus preached. This would take only a minute to say. It is rather a synopsis of what He had been saying. This summary may have been brief, but it was powerful.

And he began to say unto them, "Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." Luke 4:21

He was saying that this prophetic passage had been fulfilled in the beginning of His ministry. He was claiming to be the Anointed One, the Messiah. That was a very important statement. If they disagreed with Him, he would be stoned to death for blasphemy. He was claiming that He was sent to bring release to the captives, to heal the diseased, to deliver those who had been crushed. In this simple sentence, Jesus claimed that he was the Messiah who was to come and usher in the great celebration of the Year of Jubilee for the first time in history.

It is not surprising that the Jews of Nazareth took offense at His words. Notice how Luke describes the picture.

All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked. Luke 4:22

The initial response to Jesus' words was shock and confusion. We know this young Rabbi. We have known him all his life. Why does He talk as though He is the Messiah when He is just the carpenter's son? Their shock grew out of the fact that they knew who He was, but they were also cognizant of the powerful words which he had used concerning the Messiah.

The response of the people was strong. In effect they were either admitting to their own confusion or gently accusing Him of dishonesty. It appears that they did feel some

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confusion and this was leading to their suspicion of His dishonesty. Because they had known Him as a boy, they wondered how He could say the things that He said. Jewish people took this kind of accusation seriously. They would need much more information if they were to believe what Jesus was saying.

Jesus had to be fully aware of their feelings and expressions. Luke records Jesus' response to the questioning of His neighbors:

Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your home town what we have heard that you did in Capernaum. I tell you the truth,' he continued, " no prophet is accepted in his home town. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed - only Naaman the Syrian."
Luke 4:23-27

Jesus was pointing out that they were demanding proof that what He said was true. In effect, they were saying that there was no way for them to believe what He said until He proved to them that it was true by performing miracles here as He had at Capernaum.

Jesus went on to give two illustrations to teach that miracles were not switches that you turn on and off. Jesus chose two specific illustrations of what He was trying to tell them. It should be noted that He used one illustration dealing with Elijah and the other with Elisha. Both of these prophets were highly revered by the people of Israel. He spoke of the widow at Zephath. This story is told in II Kings 17:9,10. Zephath was a commercial city with all the attending evil reputation. It was also a place where idol worship was practiced. Devout Jews of that time could not comfortably enter the city. Jesus used it as an illustration of how God would, without explanation, chose to meet this widow's needs, but would do nothing specific on behalf of the widows in Israel at the same time. Jesus just identified the situation, but does not comment further on the event.

Jesus used a second illustration. He said to the people of His home town,

And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian. Luke 4:27

In the previous illustration, Jesus simply hinted at the blessing of God on Gentiles, in this verse, Jesus deals deliberately with it. He cites the story of Naaman. This soldier was from Syria, an arch-enemy of Israel. In II Kings 5:8f.f., the author tells the story of Elisha's healing of Naaman. The fact that God would do a miracle for this prominent Gentile, but Jesus would not do one so that they might believe in Him angered the hometown people immensely.

In 4:28, Luke records the reaction of the neighbors to Jesus' statement.

All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff.
Luke 4:28, 29

They had been insulted by Jesus' reference to Gentiles in an affirming manner. They had been affronted by Jesus' placing the Gentiles on the same level with the Jews, who were God's chosen people. This along with His Messianic claim was more than they could handle. They decided to deal with this evil as the Scriptures taught. They assumed that this home town boy had become a fraud making claims He could not substantiate. The way to deal with blasphemy was to stone the person to death. They were going to take Jesus' life as well.

Jesus was thrown out of the city. This was not only an expression of anger, it was also a way to humiliate Him. It was the same as removing the name of a family member who had humiliated the family name.

Notice, in 4:30, that Jesus did not resist them. He simply passed through the midst of the group and went elsewhere. This gives us a clear picture of the heart of Jesus. He did not need to defend Himself; He did not need to get revenge when falsely accused. He just went on His way.

4:31-37 - Jesus Healed the Demoniac at Capernaum

Jesus returned to Capernaum where He had several friends. Notice how Luke reports Jesus' activities.

Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority. Luke 4:31, 32

As you read the Gospel records, notice how many times Jesus was teaching on the Sabbath. This tells us something important about Jesus. The most devout Jews of that day felt that it was good to use the Sabbath as a special time to study the Torah. This is still their practice today. Repeatedly you find Jesus teaching the Scriptures on the Sabbath. It is safe to say that Jesus probably thought that way and His teaching on the Sabbath was a reflection of that experience.

The people responded to Jesus' teaching in Capernaum as they did in many places throughout His ministry

They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority. Luke 4:32

Jesus' teaching with authority does not reflect the tone of voice with which He taught. When the prophets taught, they said, "Thus saith the Lord..." Over the centuries, Jewish scholars identified the message of the Scriptures by quoting the understandings of more ancient scholars. This is not what Jesus did. Jesus rather took the words of the text and explained what they meant without reference to the ancient scholars. Jesus was His own authority.

At the place where Jesus taught in the synagogue there was a man who had an unclean spirit; a demon. Much modern scholarship does not accept the idea of demons, but Luke clearly calls this a demon. I believe that there are evil forces in the spirit world called demons. These demons are actively working against the kingdom of God and His people.

This demon cried out and in so doing acknowledged the deity of Jesus. Note what he said:

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Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God! Luke 4:34

This outcry gives us several pieces of information both about Jesus and about the demon. Information about Jesus:

1. He had human identification - Jesus **of Nazareth**
2. He has the power to destroy demons.
3. He is the Holy One of God; the Messiah.

Information about the demon:

1. He was knowledgeable - he knew Jesus; he knew about Jesus.
2. He knew the power of God in Jesus.
3. He acknowledged Jesus' deity.
4. He feared the power of Jesus.

Luke reports the response of Jesus when He was identified by the demon:

"Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly, "Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him. Luke 4:35

The thing about Jesus' reply to the demon was his power over the evil spirit. Jesus' dealings with the demon were firm and direct. Notice also that the demon was forced to do exactly as Jesus commanded him.

There is a strong contrast in this encounter. Jesus is attempting to improve the plight of the possessed man. The demon, as he was coming out of the man, took one last opportunity to throw the man down. Because of Jesus' power, the demon was not permitted to do the man any harm. Luke pictures Jesus helping the man; the demon is pictured abusing the man.

This encounter did not take place in secret. It happened in the midst of the people in the synagogue. The people responded to such an experience in a manner one might expect. Luke describes it in these terms:

And amazement came upon all, and they spake together, one with another, saying, What is this word? for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits and they come out. Luke 4:36

Unlike what should happen in Christian worship services, people talked openly during a Jewish worship service. The prevalent feeling, in this instance, was one of amazement. These people had never seen anything like this in their synagogue before. It would be no different in our worship services today. They were puzzled by this turn of events. They were stunned by the authority and power that Jesus held over the demon. There was an element of shock which occurred when the demon obeyed Jesus' command.

As in some other places in this Gospel record, Luke appears to be the master of understatement.

And there went forth a rumor concerning him into every place of the region round about. Luke 4:37

There is no doubt that this is true. The people in the synagogue that day were amazed. The extent of their surprise very often determines the degree of their determination to tell others what had shocked them. It seems to have been true in this instance.

4:38-39 - Jesus Healed Peter's Mother-in-law

A picture of the city of Capernaum is helpful here. It is less than a stone's throw from the synagogue to the home of Peter's mother-in-law. Jesus did not have to violate the travel restrictions in order to go to that home. We must remember that unless there are events of which we are not aware, this is still the Sabbath. The report that the sun had gone down does not come until verse 40.

Luke, being a physician, was very careful in his description of the condition of Peter's mother-in-law. The medical knowledge of that day divided fevers into two groups. We might call them major and minor. We would probably call this a major fever. Such an ailment would be very debilitating to say the least.

The text says that "**they** asked Jesus to help her." We assume that this means Peter and his wife. Jesus responded to their request for help.

In verse 39, Luke describes how Jesus ministered to the woman.

And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she rose up and ministered to them. Luke 4:39

The word "rebuke" is seldom used outside the Gospels. When used in the Gospels, the word "rebuke" is used concerning Jesus. Because it is the way the Gospels talk about rebuking an evil spirit, some have understood that this was caused by such a spirit. This could be true, but there is little support for that understanding. At least, this is a strong statement of Jesus' intensity of concern on behalf of the sick woman. The text reports two miraculous events as a result of Jesus' rebuke:

1. The fever immediately left the woman.
2. She got up and ministered to the group.

Both of these are outside the natural resolution of a severe headache, whatever its nature may have been.

4:40-41 - Jesus Healed Many; Drove Out Demons

In these verses, Luke is writing from a Jewish point of view. The beginning of verse 40 sounds like just a time designation. It is much more than that. Notice how Luke presents the information:

When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. Luke 4:40

We need to remember that this was the Sabbath. The Sabbath ends at sunset. Prior to that time, it was understood that one could act to save life, but nothing could be done to improve the life of any individual. In good Jewish fashion, Luke presents the fact that as soon as Sabbath had ended, the people brought the sick to Jesus to be healed.

Luke took special care to indicate that Jesus placed His hands on each of the sick people and healed them. The import of this is twofold:

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1. Though there were many of these sick people, Jesus took time for each one personally.
2. Each one of the sick people, that had to be brought to Jesus because of their illness, was healed.

Repeatedly this theme can be found in the Gospel records: Many were brought, but Jesus took time for each one and He healed them of their diseases.

Again, in verse 41, Jesus comes in contact with the demons. Luke sounds almost shocked as he wrote:

Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ. Luke 4:41

As indicated before, the demons were aware of the fact that Jesus really was the Son of God. In a very quiet way, Luke develops a serious contrast between the people who lived in Jesus' home town and the demons that were resident in the sick people that were brought to Him. The people of Nazareth were ready to kill Jesus because of His Messianic claims. The demons, on the other hand, screamed out that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. The word for "screamed" means to scream with pain; it is the shriek of the raven. It is the same word that was used when people screamed for the authorities to crucify Jesus.

As happened in the same kind of encounter in the synagogue, Jesus rebuked the demons and would not allow them to speak. Notice how Luke reports this situation:

... But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ. Luke 4:41b

Luke continues to come up with more and more ways to remind the reader that Jesus is the Christ; the Messiah.

There is a good reason that Jesus would not allow the demons to speak. Certainly He came to help us understand who God is, but the people were not yet ready to receive their Messiah. Israel, at this time, was deeply embroiled in a nasty standoff with the Roman government. If word got out that the Messiah had come, people would have understood this to mean that a civil liberator was on hand who would deliver them from the oppression of Rome. This would set off rebellion and riot all over the country. Jesus had to help them understand what the Messiah was like before He let them know that He was the one. He had at least three years of ministry in which to attempt to get this message across to the people before He let them know that He was the Anointed One.

4:42-43 - People Seek to Detain Jesus

The passing of a night provided a change of scenery in the story. The next morning Jesus left the house of Peter's mother-in-law. This is how Luke reported it:

At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. Luke 4:42

Have you ever wished that you could have seen Jesus just once? There is something within us that desires that physical presence. If you think about it, carefully, our desire for Jesus' physical presence is the product of our reluctance to trust; to believe in Jesus.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

When we can see, we feel no need to trust. Jesus had taught these people. They had seen His miracles; the evidence of His divine authority. If he could stay, however, they would probably be able to see more miracles, benefit from His gifts of food, healing, deliverance and grace. Their motives were probably very selfish, but altogether understandable if we take the time to think carefully about them.

Jesus' response was evidence that His priorities were exactly where they belonged. He could have stayed with them because they were very affirming of His mission and person. That had not been true in Nazareth and it would not be true in several other places as well. Still Jesus reminded these people that He had a mission to accomplish with His life.

But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because this is why I was sent." Luke 4:43

It was not that He did not like the people; it was that He had a great task to perform. Jesus' description of the good news of the Kingdom of God that had to be preached in the nearby towns gives you a glimpse of just how carefully God had prepared the mission that He sent Jesus to perform. The basis of His decision was a simple one. I was sent to do this and I can allow nothing to deter me from that goal.

In the closing verse of the chapter, 4:44, Luke summarizes the whole chapter in a sentence. Jesus was busy preaching in all the synagogues in Galilee. This was a tiring schedule. Week by week He found Himself in a different city; a different synagogue. Imagine living in one of those towns. You have heard strange and conflicting things about Jesus. Now He is coming to your town. How do you respond? What do you do in anticipation of His coming? Curiosity had to be one of the major factors in the press of the crowds. We sometimes forget that the people of Nazareth started rumors just like the people of Capernaum. Because of this, there would also be those who were influenced by the people of Nazareth who would want to see Him silenced. Jesus had to face them just as much as He did the people who wanted to make Him king.

Conclusion

As you reflect upon chapter four, there are some things that stand out in your mind. In Luke's account, Jesus' public ministry begins in His hometown. Right from the beginning, Jesus clearly identified Himself as the Anointed One and was immediately rebuffed for that claim. Throughout this chapter there is the repeated encounter between Jesus and the demonic forces. In each instance, Jesus was in control; he was powerful over them. You see, repeatedly, the great compassion of Jesus in His desire to heal the sick, even if His leisure had to be interrupted in order to accomplish it.

Reflect upon these pieces of information about Jesus. Let them have a changing effect upon the way you live, work and trust in God.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 7

LUKE 5:1-39

JESUS CALLED DISCIPLES

1. There are six paragraphs in this chapter. On the chart below, give each paragraph a title which summarizes the content of the chapter.

5: 1-11	
5:12-16	
5:17-26	
5:27-28	
5:29-32	
5:33-39	

2. Jesus used Peter's boat as a platform from which to teach the huge crowd. Immediately following this, Jesus told Peter to move the boat out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch.
 - a. What was Peter's response?
 - b. Why would Peter respond that way?
 - c. What did Peter do?
 - d. What was the result?
 - e. What was the response:
 1. Of Peter?
 2. Other fishermen?
 3. The great crowd?
 - f. What effect did this fishing experience have on Peter and his partners as Jesus asked them to be His disciples?
3. Study Jesus' contact with the leper in 5:12-16.
 - a. Study the conduct of the leper
 1. Is there anything irregular about his words or conduct?
 2. Put yourself into the leper's position. How would you feel? Why would you act as he did?
 3. How did the leper respond?
 - b. Study Jesus' response to the leper's approach.
 1. What did Jesus do?
 2. Jesus identified the basis of His response. What was it?
 - c. Again Jesus tells a healed leper to tell no one what happened. Why would He do that?
 - d. What were the results of Jesus' instructions to the leper?

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

- e. When Jesus was the one who healed the man, why did He instruct the man to go to the priest?
- 4. In 5:17-26, Luke tells the phenomenal story of the sick man who was let down through the roof.
 - a. On the basis of what the text says, what motivated the men to take the extraordinary measures to get the paralytic into the presence of Jesus?
 - b. In view of the obvious physical need of the man, study what Jesus said to him. How can you account for this
 - c. Put yourself into the place of the paralytic. Now read the things Jesus said to him. Record how you would feel after each statement.
 - d. Study the conduct of the Pharisees and teachers of the law:
 - 1. Why had they come so far to be with Jesus?
 - 2. What does this tell you?
 - 3. What do they mean by the questions that they asked?
 - e. In 5:22-24, Luke gives some insights into the character of Jesus. Make a list of the things this passage tells you about Him.
 - f. What was the response of the paralytic to being healed by Jesus? What was the response of the crowd?
- 5. In 5:27, 28, Jesus, in rather matter-of-fact style, invited Levi to be one of his disciples.
 - a. What would others think of that choice?
 - b. What would Levi think about the invitation?
 - c. Why would Jesus make such a choice to secure one who would be so close to Him?
 - d. What would being a disciple of Jesus involve for Levi?
 - e. What does that tell you about the man?
- 6. In 5:29-32, Luke records the story of Jesus being entertained in the home of Levi. Jesus was not only entertained in Levi's home, He was the honored guest at a great banquet.
 - a. What implications did this have for Jesus and those who were with Him?
 - b. Luke tells us the vocation of some of the guests, tax-collectors, but does not tell us the vocational choices of the other guests. Why do you think this was true?
 - c. Why would the community have such strong feelings about giving/receiving hospitality to/from a tax collector?
 - d. Why would the Pharisees complain to the disciples about this fact rather than to Jesus Himself?
 - e. Notice the question the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked the disciples? What were they getting at in this question?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 7

- f. As you reflect upon this paragraph, what principle of evangelism can you discover to help guide your life?
 - g. Why did Jesus identify the sinner rather than the righteous as the ones who were to receive His attention?
7. In 5:33-39. Jesus was challenged because His disciples did not fast as the disciples of John the Baptist and those of the Pharisees did.
- a. What difference would fasting make?
 - b. Those who challenged Jesus pointed out the practice of the disciples of John the Baptist and the disciples of the Pharisees together. What would cause them to choose these two groups?
 - c. Study Jesus reply, 5:34-39.
 - 1. Why did Jesus use the illustration of the guests of the bridegroom?
 - 2. Jesus used two parables in His response to this question. What was He trying to say with each illustration?
 - 3. Summarize the things that Jesus was teaching about the "old" and the "new."
8. Reflect on the total message that Luke brings in this chapter. What effect will this message have on the way you seek to follow Jesus?

LESSON 7 – LUKE 5:1-39

JESUS CALLED DISCIPLES

There are six paragraphs in the Greek text of this chapter. They are as follows:

5: 1-11	The Call of Peter, James and John
5:12-16	The Cleansing of a Leper
5:17-26	A Palsied Man Let Down Through the Roof
5:27-28	The Call of Levi
5:29-32	Jesus Was Entertained at Levi's House
5:33-39	Jesus Challenged - Why Do Your Disciples Not Fast?

5:1-11 - The Call of Peter, James and John

Read this list a few times. Notice that there is rhythm to the writing. The first paragraph deals with the call of some disciples. The next two paragraphs deal with miracles that Jesus performed. The fourth paragraph deals with the call of a disciple and the next two paragraphs deal with opposition that was being brought against Jesus and His disciples.

In 5:1-11, Luke describes the conditions surrounding the call of Peter, James and John. Though all three of the men were involved, the spotlight was on Peter.

This all happened while Jesus was preaching to a crowd of people along the shore of the Lake of Gennesaret. This body of water, in Galilee, was known by three names:

1. The Sea of Galilee
2. The Sea of Tiberias
3. The Lake of Gennesaret

Luke uses the name "Lake of Gennesaret," but does not use either of the other two names. We cannot be certain of the reason, but there is some information available which may have a bearing. Gennesaret is a Greek name for a very fertile plain on the northwest bank of the Sea of Galilee. This name may have been a compounding of two Hebrew names used earlier in the area. Apparently the body of water received the name "Lake of Gennesaret" from the name of this fertile plain.

Luke gives us an impression of the reception that Jesus received when he said,

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God,...Luke 5:1

The press of the crowd is an indication of just how much the people wanted to hear Jesus teach. Luke went further. He said that they were intent on hearing to the word of God.

There is a hint, in verse two, concerning the details of this experience.

He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. Luke 5:2

Because fishing was done at night, and the fishermen were now washing their nets, it is reasonable to assume that this experience was taking place in the morning.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

In verse three it sounds as though Jesus was just a bit forward in the use of the boats.

*He got into a boat, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat and taught the people from the boat.
Luke 5:3*

This might have been an appropriate way of thinking if Jesus was a total stranger to Peter. After all, there is no request for permission to use the boat. It looks as though Jesus decided that it would be helpful and used it without asking. As we go along there will be hints that suggest that Jesus and Peter were not total strangers at all. I believe that they had known each other for some time.

Notice that Jesus did ask Peter to do something - "...and asked him to put out a little from the shore." In verse two, the fishermen, apparently including Peter, were on the shore washing their nets. In verse three, without indication of a change of location, Peter is in the boat being asked to move out from the shore. This suggests that Peter was no longer washing nets, but had stopped and was listening to what Jesus was teaching.

In that particular area it is easy to address a large crowd without electronic means of amplification. It is even easier when a short stretch of water assists in the amplifying of the voice.

Jesus behaved like a Rabbi. When a Rabbi taught, he sat. It was the signal that the Rabbi was ready to teach. More people could see Him if He were standing, but teachers were expected to be seated.

There is an insight into the character of Jesus that Luke includes in verse four.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Luke 5:4

Notice how Jesus spoke. He did not say, "... let down the nets to see if we can catch some fish." It was a positive affirmation - "let down the nets for a catch." There are at least two reasons for Jesus to do this:

1. He wanted the people, who had been listening to His preaching to see this surprising event.
2. Jesus was a giver, not a taker. It is possible that He just wanted to give Peter something for his time, effort and the use of his boat. My own suspicion is that it was a little of both. There are times when we need to be reminded that Jesus was a giver and not a taker. He operated out of a deep sense of concern for others and will do the same for us.

Whatever the reason, Jesus created a dilemma for Peter. Notice how Peter answered Jesus:

Simon answered, "Master, we've worked all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." Luke 5:5

There was much more involved than just letting down the nets and pulling them up again. Once a fisherman put the nets into the water, he then had to take them up and go over every inch of the nets to remove the seaweed and other debris which became entangled in the nets. This was a job which consumed several hours. Add to this the fact that Peter was the expert fisherman and Jesus was the absolute novice. Again, add to this the fact

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that fishing was done at night and seldom during the day. These things help us understand the pathos you can read in the voice of Peter as he responded to the request of Jesus. It was not because it was such a great idea. It was simply because Jesus said it that Peter obliged. Evidently Peter thought that this was a complete waste of time. He was humoring Jesus, at best.

The results of Peter's acquiescence to Jesus' request were astounding.

*They caught such a large number of fish that **their** nets began to break. They signaled **their** partners in the other boat to come and help **them**. When the others arrived, they filled both boats so full that they began to sink. Luke 5:6,7*

Read these verses again. Notice the use of the words "they" and "their". The word "they" could possibly mean Peter and Jesus. The use of the word "their," however, could not possibly mean Peter and Jesus. Jesus was not a partner to any of the four - Peter, Andrew, James or John. The use of "they" and "their" strongly suggest that at least two men were in the boat with Jesus. Usually there were at least two men operating these boats. Who else was in the boat with Jesus and Peter? There is no way to be sure. It is clear, however, that at least one other person was with them.

The presence of such a large catch of fish does not mean that Jesus performed a miracle here by creating the school of fish at this instance. The text does not say that Jesus created a large catch of fish for this event. He did, however, help them to find an already existing school of fish when professional fishermen were unable to catch even one fish all night. From the statement in Luke, it appears that these four professional fishermen had never taken a catch of this size. The catch taxed their equipment to the breaking point.

The response of the other fishermen was not recorded. Notice how Peter responded to what Jesus had done.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Luke 5:8-10a

There is some indication, in verse eight, that Peter had some hired help. Apparently this is what Luke referred to when he said "He and all his companions," because 10a differentiates between these people and James and John the sons of Zebedee.

This passage is a bit like Isaiah 6 where the prophet said,

"Woe is me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." Isaiah 6:5

It is not that Peter does not want to be close to Jesus. It is that Peter had become aware of the extent of his sinfulness and said so. He felt so guilty that being close to Jesus made him feel so sinful that he could hardly stand it. This is interesting in that Peter was known throughout the area as one of the people who were most obedient to the Jewish law. Nevertheless, the proximity of Jesus made him aware of just how sinful he was, despite his attempts to obey the Jewish law.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

One might wonder aloud, just how does a great catch of fish trigger the sense of awe and the awareness of personal error so intensely in Peter? We honestly do not know. We do know that the Spirit can use any means available to Him to draw people to the Father.

Peter called Jesus "Lord." This word (*kurios*) literally means owner, master. In the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, "*kurios*" is used to translate several names for God - Jehovah, Adonai, and Elohim. This is the first time, in Luke's Gospel record, that anyone called Jesus "Lord." Of the 34 times that the word "*kurios*" is used, up to this point in Luke's Gospel, 31 of them refer specifically to God the Father.

The cry of Peter is the cry of a guilty, broken man who tried and failed to live in perfect obedience to the Jewish law. His disappointment with himself screams like the leper who was required to salute those who are well with the devastating reminder "unclean! Unclean!" To say they were all astonished is a gross understatement.

Tucked away in verse ten, is a small piece of information about the lives of these fishermen. Notice how Luke reports the situation.

*...and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, **Simon's partners.***

Luke 5:10a

These men were seasoned fishermen, but they were amazed at the results when they followed the instructions of Jesus, an absolute novice to the fishing trade. The way Luke has reported this incident, it is not Peter's father who was a partner with the father of James and John, but it was Peter who was partner with James and John. The word for "partner" in Greek is the word "*koinonia*," "*κοινωνία*." It means to have in common, to share totally. It is the word we use for "fellowship" in the church. Family had a deeper meaning in that culture than in ours. A family business was just that, a family business. It was part of the family. The father was in charge of the business, but the sons would consider themselves as part of the partnership.

Luke gives us a glimpse into the personality of Jesus in this passage.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." Luke 5:10b

Jesus was sensitive to the feelings and emotions of people. He saw fear in these men and wanted to alleviate it as soon as possible. Jesus attempted to calm Simon Peter with His words, "Don't be afraid..."

At the same time, Jesus saw men whom He wanted to be His disciples. He approached the subject by announcing what their future would hold. What a wonderful privilege, but what a shock! In Israel, no Rabbi would ever ask someone to be his disciple, it just was not done that way. They had special ceremonies under which a person could request permission to be a disciple. Jesus chose not to use that approach. One of the problems with the Jewish approach to discipleship was that it set up a barrier between the Rabbi and his disciples. The system emphasized the difference between Rabbi and disciple. Jesus chose a means by which those walls were greatly reduced, though not eliminated.

These men were very devout and deeply interested in hearing Jesus teach. They understood exactly what Jesus said and responded immediately.

So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Luke 5:11

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In one brief sentence, Luke described a total change in the lives of these men. It was not quite as simple as that, however. These men were part of a family business. Much responsibility and work rested upon each of them. It appears that they did not take a long time, but simply arranged and then followed Jesus. That would be possible for people who had a lucrative business as it appears they had.

5:12-16 - The Cleansing of a Leper

Luke was not satisfied to simply tell us that the man had leprosy, he had to tell us the extent of that disease.

While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing you can make me clean." Luke 5:12

Jesus encountered many sick people in His journeys. Why did Luke decide to tell the story of this man rather than one of the many others who were healed? First, it was an extreme case. Luke tells us he was "covered with leprosy." Whether this was the real disease of leprosy or some radical skin disorder, we cannot be sure. From the details of the story, it appears that this was a very advanced case of leprosy.

We should also be reminded that the healing of the leper was a sign that people could expect the Messiah to perform. It is not surprising that each of the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, make it a point to tell of Jesus healing of a leper. There are, however, several diseases known in that day that they do not mention.

We should note the behavior of the leper. There were carefully defined rules that a leper was required to observe. Failure to obey these rules almost always resulted in severe repercussions. A leper could not enter an inhabited city or area. Their isolation was to be complete. They were to avoid all contact with noninfected individuals. When they saw other people they were to cry out "Unclean!", "Unclean!"

This man violated most of these rules. Luke does not tell us that the man cried out to warn Jesus in any way. The man apparently made no effort to avoid contact with Jesus. He came into Jesus' immediate presence rather than flee from Him. One can understand the man's great longing to be healed. He was willing to risk infecting Jesus and the disciples and everyone with them to accomplish his goal.

Rather than flee from Jesus' presence, the man came into Jesus' immediate presence to present his petition. This placed everyone around him at risk and it could easily have resulted in physical violence.

The man prostrated himself at Jesus' feet. This was an act of subservience. He was placing himself totally at the disposal of Jesus.

It appears that the leper had at least heard of Jesus before this meeting. The man had a definite opinion about Jesus' ability. He said, "**if you are willing**, you can make me clean." The power of Jesus was never in question for this suffering man. It was a matter of will, not ability.

The leper called Jesus "Lord." Luke does not tell us the import of this designation. It could have meant that the leper had a personal relationship of forgiveness with Jesus. On the other hand, the word "Lord" was sometimes used to simply mean "sir." We can only guess as to his intent.

There is shock in the words of Luke as he tells the story.

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Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said, "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him. Luke 5:13

Certainly no one who was present had ever seen anyone do what Jesus did. Leprosy was so frightening that it was not difficult to get people to avoid lepers. Nevertheless, Jesus intentionally touched the leper. Jesus reached out His hand to contact the diseased man.

These facts give us some information. Immediately upon touching the leper, Jesus became ceremonially unclean and would remain that way for some time. Anyone who touched a leper was unclean. This prevented Jesus from attending the place of worship or taking part in any form of religious celebration.

Luke gives us some more information about the character of Jesus in this verse. Jesus was concerned enough about the leper to risk His own safety and ceremonial cleanliness to heal the man. Jesus willed for the leper to be made whole.

It is not surprising that the man was healed immediately. Jesus was omnipotent - all powerful - and it was not difficult for Him to heal the leprosy that covered the body of this man. In this magnificent act, Jesus fulfilled another of the necessary signs which would identify Him as the Messiah to those who had ears to hear.

Again, Jesus attempted to get the man to tell no one. Again, it was not because Jesus was such a private person. He wanted to show what the real Messiah was like before the people insisted that He become the kind of Messiah that they wanted to find.

Luke gives us some insight into the thinking of Jesus about Jewish law.

Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." Luke 5:14

Leviticus 14 gives the instructions about the responsibilities of a healed leper. He must show himself to the priest who would determine whether the man was in fact clean. If so, then the man was to bring sacrifices to the temple/tabernacle and the priest who made the declaration would present the healed man at the temple. The sacrifices were offered as a guilt offering, wave offering, burnt offering and sin offering. Jesus was not suggesting that the man bypass this directive, but that he observe each part of it as the rule demanded. The man was also to do this as a testimony to those who would be part of the priestly service. In the process they would learn from the healed man what had happened to him.

Verses 15 and 16 form an interesting contrast. Notice how Luke tells the story:

Yet the news about him spread even more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Luke 5:15, 16

In these verses you have gregarious crowds clamoring to see Jesus on the one hand and Jesus trying to find a place of solitude to pray on the other. Luke has given us a glimpse of what it was like to be in Jesus' situation. The crowds; the clamoring of the novelty seekers to see Him and perhaps another great miracle; all these were part of what made it difficult for Jesus to focus on the presence of His father. In the midst of it all, it was clear to Jesus that He needed time with the Father more than anything else in life. Our text here says that "... Jesus withdrew to lonely places and prayed." Some translations use the words "desert place" instead of "lonely." The word "lonely" is the better translation for two reasons. 1.

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This is the word that the Greek text used. 2. This took place in Galilee and there are no desert places in that part of Palestine and there were none in Jesus' day.

5:17-26 - The Palsied Man Let Down Through the Roof

Notice that 5:12-16 and 5:17-26 are both dealt with in very general terms. 5:12-16 took place in "one of the towns" while 5:17-26 took place "one day."

Luke speaks to the fact of the spread of Jesus' fame in obvious terms.

One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there, and the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.
Luke 5:17

These were the elite people of the land. They were unaccustomed to traveling long distances. Nevertheless, some of them had walked for over five days to hear and challenge Jesus. Jesus was very high on their priority list.

This is a picture of confrontation. The religious leaders of the nation have gathered to hear and to challenge Jesus concerning His ability. Meanwhile, Jesus is about to perform miracles because the power of God was upon Him. It is as though someone has lit a fuse and everyone is waiting for it all to explode.

Luke gives extra medical detail as he describes what happened to the paralytic.

Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles. The man was lowered into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. Luke 5:18, 19

It would have been easy, for those who carried the sick man, to feel that they had exhausted all possible means of getting this man into Jesus' presence. Their persistence suggests just how strongly they believed that Jesus could and would heal this needy man. Mark 2:3 gives more details about how the four men got the sick man into Jesus' presence, but Luke gives the most careful description of the man's condition.

It had to be a great surprise to all concerned when Jesus began to speak to the man.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."
Luke 5:20

Our text quotes Jesus as speaking to this man as "friend." The best Greek text, however, does not use the most common word for friend, "philos," but instead uses the word "anthropos" which means "man." This does not suggest that Jesus did not consider him as a friend, but it was a common salutation.

These men did not bring the sick man to Jesus for spiritual reasons. They brought him because they wanted to see him be healed. Imagine their surprise when Jesus did not ask the man what he wanted, but simply pronounced him forgiven of his sins.

Jesus had a way of surprising people. Jesus seldom answered the questions people asked. This was because he could see greater dimensions to their questions than they were aware of. This was apparently true in this instance. Are there links between the existence of sin in the life and the presence of pain in the body? There may be. That doesn't mean

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that for every person who suffers there is a direct relationship to their sinful behavior, though it could be.

Luke gives us an insight into just how intensely the Pharisees wanted to find out more about Jesus in the verse which follows:

The Pharisees and teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Luke 5:21

The Pharisees and teachers of the law were intent on finding out more about Jesus; more that could help them discredit him. They even crowded into the house where Jesus was teaching to try to find something that He might say that could be used against Him. As Jesus spoke to this sick man, it appeared that they had found the information for which they had been searching. The content of their questions betrays their thought.

They identified Jesus' words as blasphemy. If Jesus was not the Son of God, then His words would have been blasphemy. They drew the conclusion because they were convinced, in advance, that He was not the Son of God. Their second question further confirms their thinking, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Their thinking was only credible if you assume that Jesus was not the Son of God as He was claiming. The reverse side of their approach would be because Jesus is the Son of God, it is entirely appropriate for Jesus to forgive the sins of this man.

Luke's telling of this story sounds as though he had been present for the event. It sounds as though he were giving a blow by blow account of what he saw and heard. The text does not say, but we have no reason to believe that Luke was in that house.

Repeatedly throughout the Gospel narratives, there is an expression of deity that is often overlooked. They described Jesus as omniscient. As Luke said in verse 22,

*Jesus **knew what they were thinking** and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?'" But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Luke 5:22-24*

There was something both masterful and sensitive in Jesus' dealing with the Pharisees and teachers of the law. Though these men were not interested in truth, but in defending their position, Jesus was looking out for their best interests. There was no way these men could confirm whether Jesus had forgiven sins. It was a stand-off situation where Jesus could say He had forgiven the man and they could say He could not. The same is not true of the healing of this man. Jesus told the man to take his mat and go home. Either he could get up and walk, as Jesus said, or he was unable to do so. There was no in between ground. Jesus wanted the man to be healed and forgiven, but He also wanted the Pharisees and teachers of the law to know the truth about Him.

The events which followed clarified that issue, just as Jesus intended them to do.

Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Luke 5:25

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When the man stood up, clearly Jesus had the power to heal the sick. Jesus had asked the Pharisees and teachers of the law which was easier to forgive sin or heal the sick. The truth was that both were beyond the ability of the Jewish religious leaders. Jesus used the one miracle to show to His detractors that He could do both.

One thing was clear, the healed man knew whence he had been healed. Luke tells us that he took his bed, his former prison without bars, and went home praising God.

The response of the crowd was equally strong.

Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today." Luke 5:26

Everyone who saw what Jesus did was amazed and gave praise to God. Does that mean that the Pharisees and teachers of the law did the same? We do not know, but even in the Greek text the word "all" is a most appropriate translation. There is no reason to doubt the use of the word.

Although this is a very early time in Jesus' ministry, the battle lines are being drawn and the issues of difference are firmly set. They will not shift between this early point and the trial of Jesus some three years hence.

5:27-28 - The Call of Levi

Though it is stated in matter-of-fact style, this is one of the most shocking things Jesus did. Anyone with political awareness would know that it would not seem wise to take a tax collector as one of your close assistants. Nevertheless, that is exactly what Jesus did.

After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Luke 5:27, 28

Levi, of course, was the disciple Matthew. A tax collector was considered a religious heretic, because he consorted with people who performed idolatrous acts of worship in connection with the emperor of Rome; a national traitor, because he entered into agreements with a Gentile government which carried out tribute arrangements against his own nation. Nevertheless, Jesus invited Levi to be one of His disciples. Again, we should be reminded that no Rabbi would ever ask a person to be his disciple, but Jesus is doing that very thing.

Put yourself in Levi's position for a minute. It is certain that he had a lucrative business in which he had invested a large, unretrievable amount of money. He probably had a wife and family to consider. In contrast to the situation of Peter, or John, we have no reason to think that there were others in the family who could take over the business and care for the family of Levi. It appears that Levi walked away from a sizeable fortune to obey the instructions of Jesus to follow Him. Did Levi do this in an instant? It is doubtful. I suspect he had been thinking about it for some time. With all of this in mind, these verses give us some insight into the kind of commitment Jesus' disciples placed in Him.

5:29-32 - Jesus Was Entertained at Levi's House

Having left everything to follow Jesus, Levi held a great banquet for Jesus. He invited all of his tax collector and sinner friends to be guests and take part in honoring Jesus. It appears that Levi was just trying to spread the news about Jesus.

Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. Luke 5:29

This was an excellent way to introduce Jesus to the only friends Levi had in the city. Jesus' acceptance of this invitation was crucial, but confrontational. If He refused the invitation of Levi, then this tax collector would have no reason to believe anything that Jesus said. On the other hand, if Jesus attended the feast in His honor, the community would have some searing questions to ask about how He chose His friends. Jesus ate with this great congregation of sinners. In so doing, He was offering to each of them the forgiveness of all the sins of which they were guilty.

There must have been times when Jesus wondered if the Pharisees ever went home. Every place He went; everything He said was examined by these religious leaders.

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Luke 5:30

One can readily understand their concern. Such conduct, by Jesus, would raise several questions in the mind of law conscious religious leaders.

1. If you ate with a person, by so doing, you would be affirming them as persons. You suggest that you would be willing to enter contracts with them and accept the kind of person they were. They could not imagine anyone accepting a tax collector/traitor and affirming his conduct.
2. To eat with a tax collector was to place yourself in jeopardy of needing to defend them and their previous actions. These people were held in almost total suspicion by most of the community.
3. Every one of the people who watched this knew that if a person ate with a tax collector, that person would automatically lose his right to speak as a witness in court for the rest of his life.

Righteousness, to these religious leaders, was exemplified in staying as far as possible from every evil person and act. Righteousness, in the mind of Jesus, was ministering and befriending every human being, no matter what their checkered background might include. These considerations help us to understand why the Pharisees were confused by Jesus' requesting Levi to be a disciple. The thing that is not understandable was why the Pharisees came to the disciples with this question rather than to Jesus Himself. These men were most familiar with the proceedings of the courts. They did not ask idle questions. It appears that they may have asked the disciples because they were afraid to confront Jesus Himself.

The question was asked of the disciples, but Jesus gave the answer.

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*Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."
Luke 5:31, 32*

In His quiet answer, Jesus gave both a principle for witness and a stinging attack on those who challenged Him. People who are serious about sharing the good news of Jesus Christ must include this principle in their life as a witness. As those who follow Christ, it is incumbent upon us to take the good news to those who are sinners. Jesus went out of His way to associate with the publicans, tax collectors and prostitutes who obviously needed God to change their lives. On the other hand, Jesus spent more time trying to reach the sinful Pharisees than any other single group in the country. Jesus was talking about a basic philosophy - be drawn to the sinner, whoever that may be, for they are the ones who need God most. The principle Jesus proposed had one purpose - to invite sinners to repent. We would do well to follow that example.

5:33-39 - Jesus Was Challenged - Why Don't Your Disciples Fast?

Luke does not tell us who is doing the questioning in this instance. We tend to think that it is the Pharisees, but the text is silent. Luke only identifies the challengers as "they." Notice the challenge that they offer.

They said to him, "John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking." Luke 5:33

Whoever phrased the question had done a masterful job. Notice that they linked the disciples of John the Baptist and the disciples of the Pharisees on one side of the argument and the disciples of Jesus on the other. It was a means to really put Jesus on the defensive because John the Baptist was very popular and highly respected by most of the people. If Jesus took a stand against John the Baptist, He would alienate many people. That is just what His enemies hoped would be the case.

Fasting was the issue here. Fasting was a religious act that had symbolic meaning. It was used to express a depth of sorrow. It was also used to express a depth of spiritual intensity and desire. When asked why His disciples could not rid the boy of the demon, Jesus answered that this type came out only by fasting and prayer. In Israel when they wished to express the intensity of their desire, they would fast and pray.

The Old Testament does not require regular fasting. The Jewish faithful were expected to fast just one day in the year. To express their super religious feelings, many Pharisees would fast not one day, but two days in the week, but not two successive days. You may remember the prayer of the rich man and the Publican who prayed on the street corner. The Pharisee prayed, vainly, and said, "I fast twice in the week." Jesus' disciples did not abide by this assumption. Some folks wanted to know why. This was probably because Jesus made it clear that He and His followers were attempting to take each command seriously.

Jesus took the question seriously and attempted to explain the difference between His disciple's actions and the disciples of others. As He did so often, Jesus used illustrations to teach people the great news He had come to share.

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Jesus answered, "Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast." Luke 5:34, 35

Jesus is drawing a parallel between His disciples and the guests at a wedding. In Palestine, a couple essentially had open-house for a week following their wedding. They were the king and queen of the realm of their home for that time. This was an image with which all His hearers were familiar. Jesus was saying it is unthinkable that you would expect the guests, the children of the bridechamber, to fast during this joyful time. He admitted that there would come a time when they would all mourn because the bridegroom is removed from the scene. This is a double image. During the festival time following the wedding, fasting is unthinkable. Later, however, the groom will be taken away, will die, and then there will be fasting as a symbol of sorrow. This is the first image - that of the death of the literal groom. The second picture that Jesus is using here is that His disciples cannot be expected to mourn while He is with them. This is their time of joy and celebration. Their time of mourning will come when he has been taken from them. Jesus was not longing for the time when He would go to the cross, but He was being realistic about it. In effect He was saying that the time of fasting/sorrow would come later when He would no longer be with them.

Jesus decided to teach them about this issue in another way. He taught them, as He did so often, in a parable.

He told them this parable:

"No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'" Luke 5:36-39

There are several images which Jesus presents in these four verses. Each of these has a specific message which applies to the issue at hand - dealing with the issue of fasting.

The first picture that Jesus used in this parable is that of mending a garment. Jesus lived in an era when people had to mend their garments if they were torn. Some of us can remember such times. To mend an old garment with new cloth was not wise for at least three reasons:

1. The new patch would not match the cloth of the old garment. The bleaching of the sun and repeated washing would make a serious difference between the two pieces of material.
2. They would have had to tear up a new garment to obtain a patch for an old one. It might be better to simply wear the new garment because it would last much longer than an old one repaired in this fashion.
3. The new patch would have much greater strength and elasticity than the rest of the garment. The new cloth would not have shrunk as much as the old. When the garment was washed the new cloth would shrink and tear the old cloth which was

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not able to shrink any more. When stress was placed on the garment, the patch would give, but the old garment would not. Another tear would be certain.

The second picture that Jesus painted for the people who challenged him, about the fact that His disciples did not fast, was that of the fermentation process of wine. Everyone who heard Him would understand this illustration perfectly. They did not have glass bottles for their wine. Still they needed a sealed container in which the grape juice could ferment. They discovered that they could take the skin from a freshly killed animal, plug up the holes, and use it as a vessel in which the wine could ferment. They had probably all seen someone try to save money by reusing these bottles. In the fermentation process, the skins stretched as much as they could and became brittle. The following year when they tried to use these vessels again, the skin bottles would burst when the fermentation built up pressure within and the bottle had no more elasticity.

We must now ask ourselves, what is the message/messages that Jesus is sharing in these two common illustrations? We have other examples, in this Gospel, where more than one illustration is used by Jesus to stress a point. In these instances, Jesus was making more than one point about a common issue. It appears that this is what Jesus is doing in this instance.

One thing the two illustrations have in common - they both deal with the new and the old. In both instances, the new can destroy the old. Whatever we are to learn from the two pictures, it will have to do with the new and the old.

Remember, Jesus is talking about why His disciples do not fast. In the case of the new patch and the old garment, He is clearly saying that the new is stronger than the old. Let us define the "new" and the "old." By "new" we mean Jesus' attempts to fill up the meaning of the law as He attempted to do in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, chapters five through seven. Jesus was saying that in the "old" system the fasting would be done because of necessity. In the "new" system the fasting would only be done because the person wanted to fast or because it appropriately expressed the depth of their feelings.

Specifically, Jesus is saying that the "new" system is stronger than the "old" system. He was also saying that the "old" legal system could get in the way of the usefulness of the "new" system. As you study Jesus' words, clearly God wants us to be moving toward the "new."

In the picture Jesus painted of the wineskins, He is saying that to stay with the "old" wineskins"- the "old" legal system will lead to devastation. There is utility in the "new" system of using new wineskins; obeying out of desire rather than necessity. It is in the use of the "new" that they could bring the wine to proper fermentation. It was through the "new" system that they would be able to accomplish godly goals.

Jesus closes the response by talking about a third picture. It is the picture of "new" versus "old" wine. It is precisely the message that was given at the marriage at Cana, in John 2:3, when Jesus turned the water into wine. The head of the feast came to the host afterward and complained because he had saved the "best" (old) wine for last, when it should have been offered first. There was a consensus of opinion that the "new" wine was not nearly as good as the "old." Most everyone would agree. They forget, however, that eventually the "old" wine will lose its superiority and usefulness. At that point the "new" will become the "old"; the best wine. Jesus is saying that that is exactly what the Pharisees

are doing with their faith. They are clinging to the "old" because it is "old," not because it most carefully expresses the will and desire of God.

In each of these images, Jesus was giving strong warning. It is not accidental that there are three pictures; three witnesses to the fact that clinging to the legalism of their past would ultimately destroy them. They have been unwilling to see that God has something stronger, something better to offer them in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

There is more in this chapter than calling disciples and healing the sick. There is a bold, new outlook on doing God's will.

Jesus called Peter, James and John. That surprised no one. They were very devout, religious leaders in their community. Jesus, however, also called Levi. That shocked everyone who knew the tax-collector. How could a young, aspiring Rabbi call a disciple in the first place and then choose a tax-collector at that?

It was one thing to heal the palsied man whose friends let him down through the roof. What young Rabbi would dare to touch a leper when everyone knew it was hopeless and very dangerous.

Good, religious people wanted to be optimistic, but what level of optimism does it take to believe that God would forgive the unforgivable tax-collector - Levi? Religious people believed in some degree of sacrifice. To render yourself unclean and unreliable as a witness for the rest of your life was asking much of an individual.

Nevertheless, this is what Jesus did and what He called others to do as they followed Him. Things are as strained today as they were in that day. God is again calling people to take the unpopular stand when it runs counter to everything that our culture demands. Jesus calls upon His disciples today to take the serious risks; To see the costs as worth that and more to affect our dying culture for God. Jesus believed it and founded a church which, though small, shook the greatest empire in the world right to the ground. John Wesley believed it and rescued England from destruction. What about our culture? What about You?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 8

LUKE 6:1-49

THE BEATITUDES

1. There are nine paragraphs in the Greek text of this chapter. On the chart below, write a title of seven words or less that summarizes each paragraph.

6: 1- 5	
6: 6-11	
6:12-16	
6:17-19	
6:20-26	
6:27-36	
6:37-42	
6:43-45	
6:46-49	

2. Scan the chapter to see if there are time designations included in it. What conclusions can you draw from your findings?
3. In 6:1-5, Jesus was challenged by the Pharisees.
 - a. What was the nature of the Pharisee's challenge?
 - b. Luke carefully described the disciple's activities. What does Luke tell us the disciples did?
 - c. How did Jesus answer the challenge?
 - d. What does David have to do with what the disciples did on the Sabbath?
 - e. Study 6:5 carefully. What does this verse tell us about Jesus? About the Sabbath? About the observance of the Sabbath?
 - f. Compare and contrast Jesus' view of Sabbath with that of the Pharisees.
4. In 6:6-11, Jesus is challenged again.
 - a. What is the nature of this challenge?
 - b. What do these verses tell us about the atmosphere of this encounter?
 - c. Scan this paragraph for geographic information. What information can you gain from this search?
 - d. Luke tells us that Jesus knew what these men were thinking. What difference does that make?
 - e. Look at what Luke tells us about the man:
 - (1). What difference does his standing up make?
 - (2). Why did Jesus ask these visitors from other parts of Palesatine the question about doing good on the Sabbath? What difference would this make?
 - (3). Why wouldn't Jesus tell the man to come back the next day to be healed?
5. In 6:12-16, Jesus chose 12 disciples to be apostles.

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- a. What is the difference between an "apostle" and a "disciple"?
- b. Why 12?
- c. Notice the wording of 6:13. What does it tell you?
- d. In verses 14-16, Luke lists the names of the twelve disciples whom Jesus appointed apostles. Reflect on these names. What do you learn from these verses?
- e. From a Bible dictionary, find out the home area of each disciple. What can you learn from this?
- f. Are these men that you would choose to be leaders of your local church?
6. In 6:17-19, Jesus is teaching a large crowd of people.
 - a. Why would Luke tell us the location from which these people came? What does that tell us about the crowd?
 - b. What does Luke tell us about why they came?
 - c. Study 6:19 - Why would these people want to touch Jesus?
7. In 6:20-26, Luke gives us his version of the Sermon on the Mount.
 - a. Compare this with Matthew's version in Matthew 5 - 7. What did you learn?
 - b. Why did Jesus use the words "blessed" and "woe"? What do they mean?
 - c. In 6:21a, there is another contrast. What are the two contrasted portions?
 - d. In 6:21b there is another contrast - between now and the future. What does this mean?
 - e. In 6:22, there are four different forms of rejection. Can you see any progression in this list.
 - f. Look at each of the woes:
 - (1). What did Jesus deal with in each one?
 - (2). What did Jesus say about each one?
8. In 6:27-36, Jesus gives a series of commands.
 - a. Identify the commands.
 - b. What does Jesus say about each one?
 - c. Is there any progression in the list of commands?
 - d. How would you word these commands for a modern audience?
 - e. What general principle underlies each of these commands?
 - f. In the balance of the paragraph, Jesus asks a series of questions relative to the previous commands.
 - (1). What is the message of each question?
 - (2). What idea do the questions have in common?
 - (3). To what is Jesus directing the attention of His listeners in each question?
9. In 6:37-42, Jesus teaches concerning the blind leading the blind.
 - a. Put yourself in their shoes.
 - (1). How would you feel?
 - (2). What was Jesus saying about judgment?
 - (3). About whom was Jesus speaking?

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- (a). Who is the blind man doing the leading?
 - (b). Who is the blind man who is being led?
 - (4). What was He saying about them?
- b. There is a series of commands in these verses.
 - (1). List the commands.
 - (2). Study this list:
 - (a). What did you learn from this search?
 - (b). What progression, if any, do you find in these verses?
 - (c). What is the point of Jesus' statement about the plank and the sawdust?
- 10. In 6:43-45, Jesus is teaching again.
 - a. What is He referring to when He talks about the fruit and the trees?
 - b. About whom is He speaking?
 - c. List the images Jesus describes in these few verses. What is He saying in each one?
 - d. Indicate what, if any, relationship they have with each other.
- 11. In 6:46-49, Jesus was teaching about two builders.
 - a. What does Jesus say about each one?
 - b. Why would Jesus use this particular picture to teach this crowd?
 - c. What was Jesus dealing with when He painted these verbal pictures?
 - d. What was Jesus saying about this issue?
- 12. In the last three paragraphs, (6:37-42; 43-45; 46-49), Jesus is teaching about related subjects.
 - a. Survey these paragraphs again, together.
 - b. In what way are these teaching sessions related?
 - c. About whom is Jesus speaking?
 - d. What was He saying about them?
 - e. Why would He be saying this at this time?
- 13. Reflect on the teachings of this chapter. In what specific way can you relate this to your life as you seek to be more obedient to the teachings of Jesus?

LESSON 8: – LUKE 6:1-49

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There are nine paragraphs, in our best Greek manuscripts, in this chapter. They are as follows:

6: 1- 5	Jesus Challenged Picking Grain on Sabbath
6: 6-11	Jesus Healed Man with Withered Hand Sabbath
6:12-16	Jesus Named 12 Apostles
6:17-19	Jesus Taught and Healed Multitudes
6:20-26	Jesus Taught the Beatitudes
6:27-36	Love Your Enemies
6:37-42	Jesus Taught, Blind Lead the Blind
6:43-45	Jesus Taught, Tree Known by the Fruit
6:46-49	Jesus Taught, House on a Rock

There are three time designations in chapter six:

1. 6: 1 - " one Sabbath..."
2. 6: 6 - "...on another Sabbath..."
3. 6:12 - "It came to pass in these days..."

Notice that each of these time designations is of a general nature. The indication here is that Luke is not so much trying to give us a chronological account, in this chapter, as he is trying to give us episodes in the life of Jesus that convey certain kinds of information. We will see this kind of evidence throughout the Gospel.

6:1-6 - Jesus Challenged - Picking Grain on Sabbath

The fact that this experience took place on the Sabbath is far more important than the identification of the particular Sabbath on which it occurred. The way Luke wrote the text insures this emphasis.

Notice how carefully Luke identifies exactly what the disciples did.

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. Luke 6:1

In this verse, Luke identifies four different activities, but only one of them is forbidden:

1. They were going through the grain fields.
2. They picked some heads of grain - not forbidden if no sickle is used.
3. They rubbed the grain heads in their hands - forbidden as threshing
4. They ate the grain

Jewish people could walk a specific distance on the Sabbath. They were also allowed to eat on the Sabbath. The picking of grain was not forbidden unless the person used a

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sickle. Then it was considered harvesting and that came under the category of work. The rubbing of grain in the hands was forbidden because it was considered both threshing and preparation of food which also came under the category of work.

The ever present Pharisees challenged Jesus concerning these forbidden activities. It appeared that they had found Him breaking the law. Notice how Luke describes this encounter.

Some Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" Luke 6:2.

From their understanding of the law, they had caught Jesus red-handed. These were clear-cut infringements in their minds.

If you read 6:3-5 carefully, you will notice something quite interesting. They asked Jesus a question about Sabbath; He answered concerning David's eating the Bread of presence, and never mentioned the Sabbath.

This is the first time that we see this kind of emotional strength in Jesus' dealings with the Pharisees. They are attacking Him as a lawbreaker and He responds strongly.

Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." Luke 6:3, 4

The story to which Jesus is referring is in I Samuel 21:1-6. These words of Jesus bite sharply. He was talking to people who knew the Scriptures better than most anyone else in the nation of Israel. The Pharisees read the Scriptures every day of their lives. To these people Jesus said, "Have you never read..." These words of "holy sarcasm" had to be understood for just what they were, a frontal attack, by everyone who heard them.

The Pharisees confronted Jesus about the abuse of the Sabbath by His disciples. Jesus answered by talking about David violating the proper use of the Bread of the Presence, but the issue of Sabbath is not part of that story in I Samuel 21. This was something that Jesus often did. He was not avoiding the issue, but pointing out the wider concerns of it. Jesus was answering their question, but not in the terms that they would have liked. Both the situation in I Samuel 21 and this experience of picking grain on the Sabbath share the apparent violation of the law. They also both deal with finding something to eat. Jesus was saying that it was more important to save the life of Israel's future king and his men, who hadn't eaten in some time, than it was to strictly observe the prohibitions concerning the Bread of the Presence. The application of this truth to the lives of Jesus and His disciples becomes clear. He was saying that it was more important for the hungry to have something to eat than it was to observe a set of prohibitions. Some have mistaken this for existentialism. It is not. This is simply Jesus pointing out that ceremonial rites must yield to more important moral laws.

Jesus concluded the response by stating a principle which is very important.

Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." Luke 6: 5

This is a very strong statement. Let us deal with the statement before we consider the principle it contains. Jesus began by identifying himself as "the Son of Man." Jesus is not

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saying that man is Lord of the Sabbath. He is calling Himself "the Son of Man." This is more than a claim to humanity; it is rather a claim of unique status which is a designation of Deity. Speaking of Himself, Jesus said that "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath..." more important, it is the same word that the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, often uses to identify God when the Hebrew uses the terms such as: Adonai, Elohim and Jehovah. In my mind, this is an unabashed claim to Deity by Jesus. These things being true, Jesus is claiming that He is the owner, the one for whom the Sabbath exists.

This constitutes an important principle concerning our use of Sabbath. The Scriptures set forth several principles which suggest how one might respond to God in Sabbath observance. As we consider what constitutes an appropriate use of the Sabbath for us, one of the Scriptural guidelines is this: We must remember that the Sabbath exists for Jesus; He controls it. It is intended to accomplish His goals, not mine. I must therefore ask myself the question, "In what way does my use of the Sabbath accomplish the goals Jesus has in mind?"

The contrast between the Pharisee's view of Sabbath and that of Jesus was startling. The Pharisees saw the Sabbath as a prohibition they could not violate. Jesus saw the Sabbath as His own; as an experience intended to accomplish His will, not as a pair of shackles which kept Him from doing anything.

This conversation started out as a challenge over an important law - Sabbath. It ended with an announcement of the Deity of Jesus. Certainly this was not wasted on the Pharisees. They had to catch this announcement. It had to make them furious enough to stone Him to death.

6:6-11 - Jesus Healed Man With Withered Hand on Sabbath

This is the second experience which Luke used to which he attached a very general time frame. It suggests that Luke was more concerned with the content of the report than with the chronology. If that is true, then it appears that the information Luke wanted to share had to do with Jesus' confrontation with the Pharisees and the Teachers of the Law. Look at the atmosphere of this encounter. Jesus had come to worship and teach. Probably, at least some people had come simply out of curiosity. That would be a source of great distress for Jesus. The real source of distress was the presence of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law who had come for the wrong reasons. We do not know exactly where this encounter took place, but the last geographic location mentioned was at the Sea of Galilee. If so, then these men had to travel from the area of Judea, some five days walk, because that was where most of these experts lived. This gives some idea of just how intent these people were to find a way to discredit Jesus.

Luke made it clear the motive for the presence of the Pharisees and the Teachers of the Law was to find a reason to accuse Jesus. Their specific intent on this occasion was to discover if Jesus would heal on the Sabbath.

There was a man present who had a withered hand. Was this man planted there by the Pharisees? The text is silent on this point and we have no way to be certain. It would not come as a surprise if that were true.

Luke specifically suggests that Jesus knew what these men were thinking. This was a very important observation because it shows that Jesus probably was intentional about what He said and did at that point. Jesus asked the man to stand up.

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But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there. Luke 6:8

We must ask ourselves, why did the man have to stand up? Couldn't he be healed sitting down? Certainly he could. Jesus wanted this to be done out in the open where everyone could see it. This impression is further strengthened by Jesus' actions. He challenged these out-of-town visitors with some penetrating questions:

Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" Luke 6:9

This was a very difficult place for the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law. Everyone knew that they were masters of the law. There were at least four parts to the question and the answers to each was different. It was lawful to do **some** good things on the Sabbath, but it was not lawful to do **any** evil things on the Sabbath. It was lawful to save life on the Sabbath, but it was not lawful to improve life on the Sabbath. Similarly it was not lawful to destroy life on the Sabbath. This experience is reported in Mark 3:5. In that report, Mark suggested that the Pharisees kept silent. Think of the humiliation that Jesus had created for these men. They were the experts concerning the law, but Jesus asked a simple question and they were silent, unable to answer. They had never been so humiliated in their lives, and everyone knew it. These men had beat Jesus over the head with the law and now they were silenced by a simple question concerning that law. Mark adds, at this point, that Jesus looked around Him in anger and was deeply distressed by the stubbornness of their hearts. Again, Jesus was the master of understatement.

Whatever else, Jesus could not be accused of doing things in clandestine fashion. He not only did it in the synagogue, but right up in front of everyone.

He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so and his hand was restored. Luke 6:10

Jesus told the man to stretch out his hand. Imagine being in the place of the man with the withered hand. You spent every moment of your life trying to divert attention away from your limitation. Now Jesus calls on you to stand up in front of everyone; to be part of a serious argument over whether it was legal to do anything about this condition on the Sabbath and then finally to be asked to stretch out the withered hand in front of everyone. This worked against everything the man had ever learned to do with his limitation. Nevertheless, the man reached out his hand when requested to do so by Jesus. When the man obeyed, his hand was made whole. Imagine what the man must have felt to see and feel his hand totally free from the debilitating limitation that had been with him perhaps since birth. Such joy had to have no limits. This man who could do so very little, could now do anything that anyone else could do with their hand.

The response was not surprising. Notice what Luke said,

But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus. Luke 6:11

Mark put it in more vivid terms when he said:

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Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. Mark 3:6

This adds at least two additional pieces of information to what Luke said:

1. The Pharisees decided to plot with the Herodians.

This was a first for them. Pharisees would not speak to Herodians. The Pharisees considered Herodians traitors because they tried to get along with the Roman authorities.

2. They were plotting how to kill Jesus.

It is interesting that on the Sabbath Jesus was trying to save the usefulness of a man's life. At the same time the Pharisees were planning to kill Jesus. The Pharisees would consider both of these as work and therefore unlawful.

It is interesting that the Pharisees were angry when Jesus healed a man of a debilitating condition because it was on the Sabbath. They thought the man should have come back another day. To tell the truth, there hadn't been any one healed on the previous day or the previous week and they all knew it. They did not think of the synagogue as a place of healing. Now, Jesus could have told the man to come back tomorrow and He would heal him. Jesus was dealing with the deception as well as the legalism with which these men approached life. Jesus leaned on the side of mercy, the Pharisees leaned on the side of law.

6:12-16 - Jesus Named 12 Apostles

This is the third example, in this chapter, where Luke gave a general time designation. In this instance he said, "one of those days..." Again, this suggests that the content of the paragraph is much more important than the chronology of it.

One of the key decisions a leader must make is the choice of leadership who will share the responsibilities with him. As Jesus faced this crucial milestone in His ministry, He was so intentional about it that He spent the night in prayer. The general time designation leads us to believe that this was not a one night experience. There were probably several times of intense prayer before the choice was to be made.

Verse 13 gives us some information that some may overlook.

When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Luke 6:13

There were, in fact, more than 12 disciples, but out of the larger number, Jesus chose 12 whom He called Apostles. The word "apostles", "apostolos" "αποστολος" literally means "sent ones." It gradually took on the idea of carrying an important message, on behalf of another. These 12 were people whom Jesus intended to send out to carry the message He preached. This is precisely what they did on His behalf.

In verses 14-16, Luke lists the names of those chosen to be apostles:

SIMON PETER - Peter was a fisherman by trade. He came from the area around the Sea of Galilee. There seems to be some wealth in the family. He was the son of a man named Jonas and a disciple of John the Baptist before he became a disciple of Jesus.

ANDREW - He was the brother of Peter, probably a younger brother. He was part of the family fishing business and shared in the apparent wealth it offered. He too was a very devout man; a disciple of John the Baptist before he became a disciple of Jesus.

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JAMES - He was the son of Zebedee and Salome, a woman who followed Jesus, even to the cross. His father was in partnership with Jonas, the father of Peter and Andrew. They lived on the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee. Known as one of the "Sons of Thunder," he was considered short-tempered.

JOHN - He was the brother of James and son of Zebedee and Salome. He was also part of the fishing partnership in which the family was engaged. The family was known to the High Priest in Jerusalem. This suggests that they were dignitaries and well traveled. A disciple of John the Baptist, he was very devout.

PHILIP - He came from Bethsaida which was part of, or right near Capernaum. Peter and Andrew also came from that area and may well have introduced Philip to Jesus. He is the one who introduced Nathanael to Jesus. We know little of his family.

BARTHOLOMEW - In all probability, this is the same person as Nathanael. If so, he came from Cana of Galilee. Andrew brought Bartholomew to Jesus. Jesus spoke of his devotion as one who took seriously the instruction to meditate daily on the Law of Moses.

MATTHEW - He was the son of Alphaeus/Cleopas and Mary - one of those at the cross of Jesus. He too came from Capernaum. His surname was Levi. It is thought that though he was a tax collector, he came from a very devout family and that he was also a very devout Jew.

THOMAS - We know little about him. His name means twin, from which comes traditions that he had a twin sister - Lydia - or that one Judas, not Ischariot, may have been his twin. Some scholars believe he came from Antioch, but others believe he came from Galilee.

JAMES - He is called James the son of Alphas; James the less. "The Less" probably is an indication of stature; it means little. We know he had two brothers- Jude and Joses. Some believe that his legal father, Alphaeus, died without a child and that Joseph his brother, the carpenter, Mary's husband, espoused the wife of Alphaeus, because of the Levirate law, to raise up seed to his brother. This would make him the legal son of Alphaeus and legally considered the half-brother of Jesus.

SIMON the Zealot - The name translated Zealot is really Canaanaen which in Aramaic means Zealot. These people were fiery advocates of the law of Moses and an enemy of every power that might hinder Israel from serving only Jehovah. These people felt that Israel's submission to Rome was a denial of the total lordship of Jehovah. There are many questions about whether Simon had actually been a member of this group.

THADDAEUS - We know very little about him. His name was probably Judas Lebbaeus, but he was called Thaddaeus. His father's name was James, but he is not mentioned anywhere in Scripture.

JUDAS - Ischariot - Judas was the son of a man named Simon. We know no more about him. He came from the city of Xerith which is located in southern Judea. We know that Judas was a very strong nationalist and that his people may have represented the same point of view.

These are the men whom Jesus chose to be his companions as He taught the people and healed the sick.

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6:17-19 - Jesus Taught and Healed Multitudes

Luke tells us that Jesus came down to a level place. We are not certain what this means. There was a place where Jesus often taught people in this locality but it was not a "level place." The location was apparently for the comfort and ease of the people who listened. Luke describes it this way:

He went down with them and stood on a level place. Luke 6:17

In the minds of many people, this chapter contains Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount. It was more comfortable for them to sit on a level place than on a hillside.

If you read carefully, you notice that there were many disciples of Jesus present on this occasion.

...A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea... Luke 6:17b

This is contrary to our common impression that Jesus chose just twelve disciples. The numbers have to be very large in this instance.

It should be noted that this was not an exclusively local audience. People had come from all over Tyre and Sidon and even from Jerusalem and Judea. These people had walked for several days to be present and hear Him. Though it is early in His ministry, His fame had reached people all over Palestine.

Certainly, people had come for a variety of reasons. Luke identifies some of them. He said:

...who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured... Luke 6:18b

Luke lists three specific reasons for the attraction:

1. They wanted to hear Him teaching.
2. They wanted to be healed of their diseases.
3. They wanted to be healed of their unclean spirit.

We sometimes tend to look askance at people who come to God and the church for anything but unselfish reasons. Jesus did not do so. He accepted them where they were and shared His love with them without reservation.

The response of these people was significant. Luke described it in these terms.

And the people all tried to touch him because power was coming from him and healing them all. Luke 6:19

Luke's description is understood by some to suggest that this was an involuntary display of power that came from Jesus without His exertion of effort. We have no way to tell if this is true. We tend to believe that power was definitely coming from Jesus. The focus, however, was His concern and desire to help people who had need, rather than just having power emanate from Him effortlessly. Whatever the proper understanding may be, these people were eager to touch Jesus. There were many who had diseases from which they could not find relief. There were many whose conditions caused them no end of social ostracism. Jesus represented, to them, one last ray of hope to find relief from impossible situations.

6:20-26 - Jesus Taught the Beatitudes

One thing about Jesus' ministry that is easy to overlook is His use of "blessed" and "woe." We must be clear that when Jesus used the word "blessed," that is exactly what He meant. When He used the word "woe," He meant exactly what it said. We must also remember that Jesus often resorted to teaching by picture or reminder. Every Jew would recognize what Jesus was saying when He began a teaching experience with the word "blessed." This is precisely how the prophets taught. They "blessed" right conduct and pronounced "woe" on any form of disobedience. Jesus was teaching the things with which the text dealt. He was also identifying Himself with the prophets of old whom Jerusalem and all Israel had misused across the years.

The word "blessed" is often translated "happy," to pronounce happy, or to be blessed. It is to have an inner quality of life which bespeaks joy and blessing.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus begins His sermon with a blessing upon the poor.

Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Luke 6:20

Jesus pronounces the prophetic blessing on the poor and then offers them a reason for their blessing.

The word "poor" does not just mean penniless. It literally means one who crouches or cowers. It also carries the connotation of being powerless to enrich your life; it stresses the poverty situation rather than the experience of begging as such.

Jesus goes on to say, "yours is the kingdom of God." The use of the present tense makes a very strong statement. He does not say, yours will be the kingdom, but yours is... He was not saying that they are already in the kingdom, but that they are now experiencing some benefits of that kingdom. By using such a strong contrast, Jesus is saying that the "kingdom of God" is the opposite of this poverty that they experience in the present. There is hope for those whose only hope is in God.

The second Beatitude has to do with hunger.

Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Luke 6:21a

The word "hunger" used in this verse is the same word that was used in Matthew 4:2 to describe Jesus' condition following the 40 days in the wilderness where He fasted. This term can be used in a literal sense to describe physical hunger, but it can also be used as a metaphor to describe spiritual hunger. There is no way to tell, from the word itself, which one Jesus meant. We must keep in mind that Luke takes special care to identify social ills and abuses in the culture of his day. No one can speak in final terms about this, but I tend to think that Jesus is speaking of that part of the culture that had nothing to eat. There will be occasion to speak further to this issue a little bit later.

Here again, Jesus turns to the strong contrast for purposes of effect. There are two contrasts in this statement. They are:

1. The contrast between "now" and "the future."
2. The contrast between "hunger" and "satisfied."

The opposite of being hungry, in this instance, is being "satisfied." The word "satisfied" means to satisfy with food. We must remind ourselves that this word also can

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be used in both the literal sense, to speak of the need for food, and as a metaphor, to speak of spiritual longing. Again it cannot be decided with finality, but I tend to think it deals with physical hunger. We will speak further to this issue a little bit later.

The next Beatitude has to do with weeping.

...Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Luke 6:21b

Here again, Jesus draws a strong contrast between "now" and "the future." The word "weep," as Jesus used it, has to do with intense expressions of grief and sorrow. It is sometimes used in describing the feelings of those who mourn the loss of a loved one. The literal use of the word seems to be most appropriate in this instance. Whatever Jesus meant, it describes an emotional expression which is very intense.

Jesus stressed the idea of "now." These were people who had known a great deal of weeping. They had suffered immensely at the hands of the Romans and others. The use of the word "now" only emphasizes more strongly what will happen in the future.

Jesus makes a promise to those who "weep now." He said that they will "laugh." The word "laugh" is a very emotional term. It is the exact opposite of the "intense weeping" that was mentioned in the early part of this contrast. Their expression of joy, in the future, will be as strong as their in sorrow in the present.

In the next Beatitude, Jesus uses four different forms of rejection to describe what has been happening to them.

Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Luke 6:22

The four forms of rejection are:

1. They will hate you.
2. They will exclude you.
3. They will insult you.
4. They will reject your name as evil.

There is a progression in the list of four. The first two are passive; the last two are aggressive. Hate, when it increases in strength, actively removes itself from the object of hatred. Exclusion will intensify and turn to insults which will intensify to the point of defamation.

Hate is a malicious feeling which is not necessarily warranted. Jesus is very specific in his statement about these four expressions of persecution. God's people are blessed, happy, when they are hated specifically because of their commitment and obedience to the Son of Man. Most of us have little experience with persecution. Most would agree, however, that even with their limited experience, they did not feel especially blessed as they endured such an encounter. Jesus understood the process very well. He knew that hatred would lead to exclusion. The word "exclusion" in the Greek text is a compound word - *apo* - from; "*oridzo*" "*ὀρίζω*" - to limit, or decree. It means to sever from the rest, to isolate from society, to excommunicate. It is more than simply being isolated from society. They would be prohibited from going to the temple. This was a tragedy for Jews. The temple was very important in their lives. In their thinking it was cutting them off from the opportunity for worship and forgiveness.

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The warning of a coming insult was also a significant attack against a Jew. The word "insult," or "reproach" is translated elsewhere in the book "to cast in one's teeth." It is to upbraid, ridicule or revile. In Western culture, we have a very low appreciation for what Eastern cultures think of as "saving face." This is ultimately important to them, but hardly worth considering in our culture. Jesus was saying that they would endure the public humiliation of being attacked for their faith in the Son of Man.

The idea of "rejecting your name as evil" was even stronger in their eyes. The idea of rejecting means to cast out, or to cast down. It describes a process of humiliating, of treading upon a person's name with the intent of destroying it. This was one of the worst things they could possibly do to a person. Notice the reason that Jesus gives these people for the response that seems so strange.

*Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven.
For that is how their fathers treated the prophets. Luke 6:23*

This is another of the seeming contradictions of Jesus. He is suggesting that they rejoice and give thanks when they are treated in the most humiliating way possible and excluded from the temple. When we read the words "leap for joy," we understand that as an exaggerated statement. Most Western people would never "leap for joy" in their entire adult life. That is not true for the people of the Near East. "Leap for joy" accurately describes how they would respond to exciting news. In this verse, Jesus gives two reasons why He couldn't encourage them to rejoice and leap for joy:

1. Your reward is great in heaven.
2. It identifies them with the martyrs who have suffered before them.

Jesus offers them a future hope. They can endure the present because something infinitely better will be theirs in heaven. It was a great honor for them to be identified with a prophet. In another sense, Jesus was saying, the treatment you receive is not different from what the prophets or anyone who was faithful to God would receive.

The word "but" suggests one of the strongest forms of contrast. That is precisely what Jesus has in mind. He now turns from the happy section to the "woe" section of this prophetic statement. The word woe is an interjection, a crying out in deep pain or disappointment. It is a bit like the Hebrew word "oivae." It stands for "alas," "woe" or "calamity." It conveys the emotional content of a desperate feeling rather than the specific meaning of a word.

This woe was aimed at the rich. Luke quoted Jesus:

*But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.
Luke 6:24*

The intent here is not so much the possession of wealth as it is the attitude toward it and the use of it. It may not seem so, but this is a very strong statement. This is particularly evident in the reason Jesus gives for their woe. Jesus said, "...You have already received your comfort." The word for comfort is one which is very familiar to many Christians, "paraklaesin" "παράκλησιν." This word is the source of our word "Paraclete," which describes the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. Jesus made a biting statement. The thing that stands beside the rich, in their hour of need, is their money. No matter how much they have, it is never enough. On the other hand, those who do not place

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their trust in riches have a Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, who stands beside them in every moment of trial.

The second of these four "woes" has to do with being well fed.

Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Luke 6:25

The word for "well fed" means "to fill full, to satisfy." One must determine whether Jesus is speaking in a metaphor. We must remember that Jesus is talking in spiritual terms elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount. We have no reason to think that Jesus has suddenly taken a different tack at this point. I tend to favor the idea that Jesus is talking in physical terms about spiritual things. Jesus is not saying that there is something wrong with having enough to eat, physically or spiritually. That was one of the things God promised His people. There is a problem when one has so much, physically and spiritually, and he wastes it, while others starve searching for such knowledge.

Jesus follows this indictment with a promise of immanent doom: "for you will go hungry." It is a promise that what these people had in abundance, and in which they trusted, they will soon totally lack. Hunger and starvation were among the greatest fears these people could imagine. Jesus was saying that placing their trust in status and wealth instead of God was a serious error and would lead to dire circumstances.

The third woe which Jesus delivered has to do with another basic desire - the desire for joy.

...Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Luke 6:25b

The word for laugh means to laugh loudly; an intense, total release of laughter. Jesus stressed the fact that He was addressing those who are currently laughing. In many times and places Jesus attacks those who are wrapped up in momentary celebration, rather than considering the long term consequences of their actions and choices. It appears that Jesus was not condemning their joy, but perhaps the fact that they had joy at the expense of those who sorrowed. That possibility cannot be confirmed in the text.

The use of the word "for" tells us that Jesus is going to give a reason for the statement He just made about laughter. The word for "mourn" is "penthaesete," "πενθήσετε" which means to lament over, to be sad, to bewail one's situation. They may be satisfied now, but intense sorrow lies in their future.

The word for "weep" is "klausetē" "κλαύσετε." It is used to describe a loud expression of grief. It is often employed to describe mourning for the dead. It is intense in nature and expresses severe frustration over their inability to change that which causes them this intense pain.

Jesus, in this sermon, is contrasting the people who received the "blessed" and those who received the "woe." The pronouncements are stark and threatening. They are the exact opposite of each other. In so doing, Jesus also described totally opposite situations for each. He denounced the rich, not because of their wealth, but because of their trust in the tangible, and not in God.

The final "woe" deals with another natural desire - approval. Jesus said:

Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets. Luke 6:26

This is a difficult idea for us to grasp. We were taught that it was important to receive the affirmation of others. When we fail to receive this affirmation, we tend to come apart. This is not an attack on affirmation, but rather it is an attack on their trust in the visible, their desperate need for the benefits of universal acceptance. Jesus wanted these people to know what universal approval meant in the past. Even when leaders were supported by all the people there was trouble. Jesus reminded them that universal approval led to the support of unfaithful prophets. Universal approval may seem like success, but more often it leads to destruction.

6:27-36 - Love Your Enemies

Having given both the "blessing" and the "woe" Jesus now gives a series of instructions for His followers. In verses 27-32, He gives nine illustrations of how His disciples respond to situations of opposition.

Jesus begins with a command:

But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies,... Luke 6:27a

The literal statement of the Greek text is even stronger, "You love your enemies and keep on loving them." This is called the "present active imperative." It is an action which begins and never ceases. It is a lifestyle, not an isolated action. The Greek is a very descriptive language. Where we have one word for "love" they have three:

1. "Eros" "ἔρως" - an erotic form of love
2. "Phileo" "φιλέω" - the love of those most dear to us.
3. "Agapae" "ἀγαπάω" - an uncaused form of love that has no strings attached. It is not dependent upon the response of others for its continuance.

Jesus used this last form of love to instruct His followers concerning the way they treat enemies. We are to love enemies because they are -- not because they do things of which we approve. Being Jesus' disciple is a positive experience. We are to do good things rather than being forbidden to do bad things.

The second instruction has to do with our response to hatred. Jesus said,

Do good to those who hate you,... Luke 6:27b

Again, the Greek has three different words to describe the quality called "good":

1. "Agathos" "ἀγαθός" - something beneficial in its effect; that which is good in its character. It acts beneficially toward others.
2. "Kalos" "κάλος" - that which is good intrinsically - at its core, in its essence.
3. "Kaerestos" "χρηστός" - means that which is pleasant, kindly.

The word that Jesus used here is "kalos." Jesus expects His disciples to go beyond actions that have beneficial effects to those actions which are good in themselves and as such give a reflection of our character rather than just make people feel good. Jesus commands His disciples to act in ways which are "good" in and of themselves toward those who hate them. The word "hate" means to harbor negative feelings which could not be justified. This is an attitude which expresses itself in actions which are by nature malicious or

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unkind. When people are unfortunate, deal with them out of a heart which is in its center, in its intent, "good."

Jesus, in the next command, deals with the natural responses of life. He commands His disciples to respond positively to negative treatment. He said:

Bless those who curse you... Luke 6:28a

This is an unnatural response. Children do not have to be taught to give an "eye for an eye..." It comes quite naturally. One must learn to return a positive action following negative treatment. Again, Jesus' command is a Present Active Imperative. It would be more accurate to translate it, "Bless and keep on blessing..." Let speaking well of others be a way of life for you, even if they curse you. Ask God to bless these people and never stop asking God to bless them. Make it a way of life to do everything possible to make those happy who curse you. On the other hand, the word curse means to pray against or to intensely wish evil upon another. In other words, while enemies are busy hoping that something very tragic will occur in your life, make it a way of life to ask God every day to bless and prosper their lives.

Jesus continues describing the way of life for His followers:

Pray for those who mistreat you. Luke 6:28b

The word pray is always used to describe prayer to God. This is a very positive instruction. It suggests that our petition is for the benefit of these people. Jesus describes how these people treat His followers. The word translated "mistreat" is really a bit stronger than that. The word really means "to insult" or "to harass." When a person's basic treatment of you is insulting, then make it a way of life to seek God to bless their lives on a daily basis. This is most difficult for us to hear. Think of what this would mean to people who lived their lives on an "eye for an eye" basis. This would be almost too much for them to consider. Nevertheless, this is what Jesus commanded them to do.

The next description is one of greater intensities of abuse.

If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. Luke 6:29a

At face value, this would still be very difficult. There is more, however, than this. To be struck on the cheek has several possible intentions. It may be simply that a person was slapped on the face. On the other hand, when a Jewish person identified himself with Christians, he was considered a heretic and given a ritual backhanded slap as an insult to his person. It was a way of saying we have lost all respect for you. It could also be a way of describing an insult. There is one problem that needs to be addressed. The word "cheek" does not appear in the Greek text. The word is really jaw. The difference is that "jaw" is a greater expression of abuse than "cheek." Jesus was saying that when you are abused and insulted by people for whom this is a way of life, respond to this physical violence not by returning a similar action, but by turning the other cheek. Refuse to become what they are. Respond in a positive way and show them the difference between their actions and yours.

The next instruction deals with violent theft. Jesus said:

*If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic.
Luke 6:29b*

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Jesus identified two pieces of clothing with which these people would have been quite familiar.

1. Cloak - the "Himation" "ἱματίον" - This was a heavy piece of nearly square cloth. It was large enough for the poor Jewish man to wrap himself up in it at night. For this reason, it could not be kept over night in pledge. During the warm part of the day it was worn over the shoulders. This cloak was so large it could be used as a sling in which to carry heavy burdens. This was the outer garment a Jewish man might wear.
2. The tunic - the "Chiton" "χιτίον" - This was a very simple garment. It would be like a shirt or nightgown. Most often it was made of two pieces of cloth sewn with openings for the head and arms. It was a very light garment and persons who wore nothing else were spoken of as "naked."

This is a strong command. Most men wore only two garments, but some more prominent or well-to-do wore three. He was saying that if someone violently takes your cloak, do not resist his taking the inner garment as well. If this were done, the person would have on, at best, an ankle length, light, inner garment. This would not be sufficient for the biting cold that they experience when the sun goes down. Jesus is describing a way of living. It is something that His followers should do as a matter of course. This is a hyperbole, an exaggeration given for effect, and is not intended to be taken literally. This was a common practice in that culture. Jesus was trying to help these people see that they should be deeply concerned about the needs of other people. He was not urging them to allow themselves to be victimized unnecessarily.

The next command is also a hyperbole. It has caused many people to question what Jesus was saying.

Give to everyone who asks of you,... Luke 6:30a

Again, this is in the Present Active Imperative - something you do and keep on doing. One might better translate it, "Give and keep on giving to everyone who asks of you." It is a way of saying that giving, caring deeply for the needs of others, must be a way of life rather than an occasional interest for those who would be disciples of Jesus. People immediately wonder just how literally one should take this unusual command. Am I really commanded to give to anyone exactly what they ask of me? If that were true then I would be unable to refuse unreasonable requests. It is certain that there would be several of these. Because of the hyperbolic nature of this statement, Jesus was really saying that we should be very sensitive to persons who in deep need come to us for help. In the same spirit, Jesus continued,

*"...and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back."
Luke 6:30b*

This, again, is a hyperbole and was not intended to be taken literally. Jesus was saying that we, as His disciples, must be very sensitive to the needs of people who take things away from us. One can contribute to the delinquency of a person who feels that they can take things that belong to others, by simply letting them get away with their evil ideas. It is possible, however, for me to be seriously concerned for people who have little and minister to their needs even if it is personally costly to me.

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Notice that Jesus began, in verse 27, with a general command which is involved in each of the nine illustrations that He used - "love your enemies." Now He closes with a general illustration which encompasses each command that He gave in the previous illustrations.

Do to others as you would have them do to you. Luke 6:31

We speak of this as the "golden rule." This command is also in the Present Active Imperative form. This means that it should be begun and never stopped. It is intended to be a way of life, not just a response to evil. This instruction is very important to us because it offers us some direction in our attempt to express love to our enemies. Often there are times in life when we do not know how to relate to people in an attempt to reflect the love of Christ to them. Jesus is saying that in those instances we need to think to ourselves, just how would I like for others to treat me in such a situation and then do it.

In the remaining part of this paragraph Jesus discusses the rationale for these commands. In three successive sentences, Jesus teaches a direct message by means of a question. In Inductive Bible Study we call interrogation. Notice the first question Jesus asked:

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. Luke 6:32

The word for love, used here, is "agapae," "αγάπη" - love that has no limitations. We tend to think of this as a uniquely Christian expression. Jesus here, however, uses the term as a description of the relationships between people who are not His followers. His intent is that non-Christians express love to people that they know they can trust. Though the word for love is the one without limits, they show that limitless love only to a limited group of people who will respond in kind. Jesus' question was a telling one. He was saying, if you do only what non-Christians do, you are no different from they are. This presupposes that there is a discernable difference between the two. It appears that Jesus is trying to get the crowd to see that people could distinguish a character difference between the follower of Jesus and the person who does not follow Him. That difference has to do with the expression of love.

In verse 33, Jesus asks another question, but it points in the same direction as the previous question.

And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. Luke 6:33

The issue is the same. The expression deals with doing good rather than expressing agapae love. The word for "good" is a description of doing things that are a benefit for others. They would come under the general category of "good." Jesus, assuming that the conduct of His followers must be categorically different from those who do not, is arguing that there is no benefit if our conduct and motives are not superior to those which move the non-Christian to action. Again, Jesus is contending for a marked difference between the motives and actions of His followers and those of sinners.

Again, in verse 34, Jesus uses still another illustration of the same truth.

And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners', expecting to be repaid in full." Luke 6:34

A rule that every Jewish person would remember was that though they could charge high interest to a Gentile, they were not permitted to charge interest to another Jewish person. When a Jew lends to a Gentile, high interest was charged. When the Christian lends to a Gentile or a Jew, he should treat that situation with the same kindness with which other Jews were treated. Jesus was saying that in every area of our lives there must be a categorical difference between the motives and actions of the disciple and the sinner.

Verses 35 and 36 form a brief summary of these three rationales.

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Luke 6:35, 36

Notice that there is a slight change in this brief summary. In this restatement, Jesus applies each of the three illustrations to the enemies. This was not true in the original pronouncements. Apparently this was Jesus' intent in both instances. Our sonship of "the Most High" is dependant upon our display of conduct that is parallel in mercy to that of Jesus and His Father.

In even shorter compass, Jesus identifies each of the three illustrations as an expression of mercy. He drew another parallel when He said, "**just as** your Father is merciful." There should be a demonstrable parallel between the conduct of the sons and that of the "Most High." When people look at our conduct they should see actions which parallel those of our merciful God.

6:37-42 - Jesus Taught - The Blind Leading the Blind

This is the first of three paragraphs in which Jesus taught ideas which were strange to those who listened.

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you... Luke 6:37, 38a

The people who listened to Jesus were well trained in the idea - "an eye for an eye." If you look carefully, this paragraph illustrates the principle that Jesus advanced in verse 31. If we do not want to be judged, then we should not judge others. If we do not want to be condemned, then we should not condemn others. If we want to be forgiven, then we should be willing to forgive others. If we would like to be recipients in those times of our need, then we need to be willing to give to those who are now in need. This is interesting to consider in view of the presence of the Pharisees who were brutal in their judgment of Jesus and His disciples. It is fair to assume that Jesus is dealing with the Pharisees in each of these illustrations.

Notice, however, that Jesus inserts another facet of this whole issue when He said,

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Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Luke 6:39

He has added the fact that not only will what we give be what we receive, but the measure with which we give will be the measure with which we will receive. We should notice the local image that Jesus used in His announcement. He said, "will be poured into your lap." Everyone who heard Jesus would understand this image. The word translated "lap" is literally bosom. Men wore at least two pieces of clothing. The inner garment was called the chiton (Greek) or Kethoneth (Hebrew) and the outer garment was called a mantle. The chiton was fastened at the waist and served as an inner pocket to carry belongings or money. It is to this pocket that Jesus refers when He spoke of the "good measure poured into your lap."

We must remind ourselves that Jesus was talking to a crowd of people, but evidently He was talking about the Pharisees. Notice what He said:

He also told them this parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher." Luke 6:39, 40

Think about this parable for a minute and remember that there were Pharisees present and Jesus was probably talking about them. When Jesus said, "Can a blind man lead a blind man?", this was a stinging indictment. What He was really saying was, Can a blind man who is blind because he will not see (Pharisee) lead a blind man (layman) who is blind because he was not trained? A student is not above his teacher. People who pay attention to the Pharisee's teaching will not be any better than the Pharisees they follow. They will be just like the teachers to whom they listen. Again, everyone would understand. The Pharisees would be furious and the people would be understandably warned.

In the concluding verses of this paragraph, Jesus continues His teaching against the deception of the Pharisees. He said:

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" Luke 6:41

I believe that there is plenty of good evidence that Jesus had a keen sense of humor. Look at the image that He drew for the crowd. He talked about a man with a "plank" (a better translation would be telephone pole) in his eye trying to wipe a speck of sawdust from the eye of another person. Jesus is obviously taking aim at the Pharisees. Here is a group of people who have major problems with their own lives trying to tell people who have made slight errors how to run their lives.

Jesus continued in much the same vein:

How can you say to your brother, "Brother let me take the speck out of your eye" when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Luke 6:42

Again, Jesus was taking aim at the Pharisees. His attack was direct and blunt. Jesus called them "hypocrites." A "hypocrite" was a Greek or Roman actor. These actors wore masks and pretended to be the person they portrayed. Jesus was saying that this is what

the Pharisees did always. He pointed out the foolishness of the things they regularly did. Everyone understood this attack. Is it any wonder that the Pharisees despised Him the way they did, although He told the truth about them?

6:43-45 - Jesus Taught - A Tree Is Known By Its Fruit

Jesus used another form of teaching to reach the crowd who had gathered to hear Him. He used simple common sense coupled with wise sayings that everyone had heard from the time they were children. A similar down-on-the-farm saying from my childhood goes this way, "You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear." This was often repeated when someone was trying to get the child of what the speaker considered useless parents to make something of himself. The Pharisees could not have missed the barbs thrown in their direction as Jesus taught the crowd.

Jesus said,

No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. Luke 6:43-45

There are eight pictures in this statement to illustrate what Jesus was saying:

1. Good tree with bad fruit
2. Bad tree with good fruit
3. Tree recognized by the fruit it bears
4. Figs on thornbush
5. Grapes on brier bush
6. Good man brings good things out of good store of his heart
7. Evil man brings evil out of evil stored in his heart
8. Mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart

Remember, again, that Jesus is talking to the huge crowd about Pharisees; some of whom were in the crowd. The Pharisees had a reputation for being the unusually righteous ones of the community. Jesus is saying that a reputation does not make the man. Look at what the man does and let that determine what kind of man he is. Ultimately the way we speak, in unguarded moments, will display the real content of the heart. You can call a man good and righteous all you want, but if evil deeds and false words are the fruit of his activities, the reputation is faulty.

6:46-49 - Jesus Taught - The House Built on the Rock

In this brief paragraph, Jesus uses the picture of two builders to display His teaching about obedience. His teaching grows out of an observation He made about people who claimed to be His followers.

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Why do you call me, "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete. Luke 6:46-49

Again, Jesus used a picture that these people knew very well to illustrate a truth that was not nearly so clear in their minds. The picture on the front cover of this book shows the location where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. You will notice that a flash flood has left silted sand in a wadi. (A wadi is a dry valley through most of the year, but is a water channel during the rainy season.) This wadi is located near the Qumram community by the Dead Sea. It rains only once or twice a year in that area. The area is so barren that when it does rain, the water runs right off the mountains and creates flash floods in the valley immediately. Bedouins who live in the area know better than to set up their tents on the smooth flat surface of this flood plain. If a flash flood would come, everything would be lost. This man in Jesus' parable built his house on rock. The flood producing rains finally came, but did not harm that house at all. That is just like the person who calls Jesus "Lord" and does what Jesus says. If He is Lord, then He deserves to be obeyed by those who belong to Him.

Jesus also described another man who should have known better, but built his house on the level flood plain. It seemed very nice. The rains always come, however, and these rains always produce floods in this wadi. The house had no foundation to hold it against the tremendous power of the flood. Finally, the house was destroyed. This is like the man who called Jesus Lord, but did not do what Jesus said. I suspect that some Pharisees were being described in this picture along with some people of the crowd. Imagine you were in that crowd. You are a Pharisee who is pretending that you believed everything Jesus said. Suddenly Jesus began to talk about you in these terms. What would you think? There would be terrible fury and an almost irresistible urge to get even with Him for demeaning you in this way. I suspect that these were quite realistic feelings that gripped the hearts of several of the Pharisees in that crowd by the Sea of Galilee.

Conclusion

The Pharisees challenged Jesus concerning what they considered His errors. Jesus graphically attacked the demonstrable errors of the Pharisees.

In 6:1-11, Jesus is confronted twice about His use of the Sabbath. The upshot of this confrontation was that the Pharisee's legalism was displayed along with Jesus' deep concern for people. This happened time and again throughout His ministry.

When Jesus was falsely attacked He did not retreat, but quietly went about His mission of choosing disciples, teaching the people and confronting error in direct and unmistakable terms. It gives you a picture of the kind of person Jesus was. He taught the people what God was like and what God wanted His people to be and do.

Though it was a shock to the people, Jesus highlighted **love** as the key to what God was doing in the hearts of individuals. To people who saw an endless list of "don'ts" as

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the key to righteousness, Jesus taught a liberating message - what you are is far more important than what you are reputed to be. In a variety of ways, Jesus taught that you can say all the right things, without living it, and still end up in total spiritual destruction. On the other hand, you can say and **do** the right things and be indestructible.

It is hard to read this chapter without looking into the mirror. If we had been standing in that crowd, how would we have felt as Jesus talked about people who talk a good life, but do not live it? What would have thought as he talked about the impossibility of good fruit growing on a bad tree? There is a great deal of room for reflection on the way we live our lives.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 9

LUKE 7:1-50

JESUS HEALED CENTURION'S SERVANT; WIDOW'S SON

1. In the Greek text there are five paragraphs in this chapter. On the following chart write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

7: 1-10	
7:11-17	
7:18-30	
7:31-35	
7:36-50	

2. In 7:1-10, the Centurion is mentioned in a positive light.
- What does the passage say about him?
 - Put yourself in the place of the Centurion. How would you feel in this situation?
 - Why did the Centurion send a servant to Jesus rather than go himself?
 - Why did the Centurion dissuade Jesus from coming into his house?
 - What does this paragraph tell you about Jesus?
3. In 7:11-17, Luke tells of another healing.
- In Luke 7:12, 13, he gives us some carefully worded information about the widow and her son:
 - What does Luke tell you about the widow?
 - What does Luke tell you about the son?
 - What does Luke tell you about Jesus in this experience?
 - Why was it important to tell you about the large crowd of people?
 - In 7:14, Luke tells us that "Jesus touched the coffin." Why was that important?
 - What difference does it make that Jesus told the son to "get up"?
 - Look at the response of the crowd. What does it tell you?
4. In 7:18-30, there is a flash back to John the Baptist.
- Compare Luke 3:16, 17 with 7:18, 19. How do you account for the difference?
 - Study Jesus' response to the question of John's disciples:
 - What does this question tell you about John?
 - Does Jesus answer their question?
 - What did Jesus really say to John's disciples?
 - What did Jesus mean by his statement in 7:23?
 - Jesus asked the crowd several questions in 7:24-28.
 - What questions did He ask?

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2. What was He saying to the crowd through these questions?
- e. In 7:27, Jesus quoted from Malachi 3:1.
 1. To whom does Jesus imply that this refers?
 2. What does this reference suggest about this person?
 3. What does this say about Jesus?
- f. In 7:28, Jesus made a comparison.
 1. What does this say about John?
 2. What does this say about you?
- g. 7:29, 30 form a parenthesis.
 1. In this parenthesis, Luke makes a contrast. What is contrasted?
 2. What does Luke say about each one?
5. In Luke 7:31-35, Jesus is describing a group of people.
 - a. Who are they?
 - b. How does Jesus describe them?
 - c. In 7:35, Jesus said, "But wisdom is proved right by all her children." What did Jesus mean by this statement?
6. In 7:36-50, Jesus was a guest in the home of a Pharisee.
 - a. A woman also came into the house. How does Luke describe this woman?
 - b. What did this woman do?
 - c. What did her actions mean?
 - d. What gift did the woman bring? Why?
 - e. Why did Luke tell us about the woman drying Jesus' feet with her hair?
 - f. Why did the woman kiss His feet?
 - g. The Pharisee reacted strongly to what the woman did.
 1. How did he respond?
 2. Why did he respond that way?
 - h. Study Jesus' response to the Pharisee's reaction.
 1. What did Jesus say?
 2. What did Jesus imply by His response?
 3. Why did Jesus use the parable of the two debtors?
 - i. In 7:48, 49, Luke indicates the reaction of the other guests.
 1. How did they react?
 2. What was the implication of their question ?
 - j. In 7:49, 50, Jesus pronounced this woman forgiven.
 1. Jesus said, " Your faith has saved you." What did He mean?
 2. Jesus also said, "Go in peace." What would this mean to the woman?
7. I suspect most of us can find ourselves somewhere in this story.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 9

- a. Where do you find yourself in this parable?
- b. What does that say to you?
- c. How do you respond; how do you feel about that?
- d. What happened to you when Jesus said, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."?

LESSON 9: – LUKE 7:1-50

JESUS HEALED CENTURION'S SERVANT; WIDOW'S SON

In the Greek text there are five paragraphs in this chapter of Luke's Gospel. They are as follows:

7: 1-10	The Centurion's Servant Was Healed
7:11-17	The Raising of the Widow's Son
7:18-30	John the Baptist's Disciples Seek Out Jesus
7:31-35	Jesus Condemns Faultfinding Generation
7:36-50	The Sinful Woman Anoints Jesus

Notice that while there was a major emphasis, in chapter six, on teaching; there is a major emphasis on miracles in chapter seven.

7:1-10 - The Centurion's Servant Was Healed

The first verse of this chapter connects the teaching experiences of chapter six and the miracles of chapter seven. It gives us some very important information. Jesus had been teaching on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Now He had gone just a short distance to the north to Capernaum.

The important thing about this was that He went to Capernaum. The people of this community knew Jesus very well. The text does not say so, but it appears that the Centurion either lived in Capernaum or was quartered there. Could he have known Jesus from worshipping in the synagogue there? There is no clear indication in the text. It is highly possible.

This is a remarkable passage in the New Testament; one of few where the authors speak of a Roman official in a positive light. It is not surprising that Luke, writing to Gentiles, spoke in these terms. Take a moment and notice the information that this brief paragraph tells us about the Centurion.

1. The Centurion, the commander over approximately 100 soldiers, had servants to do his work. It was a sign of some wealth. The word for servant - "doulos" "δούλος" describes a form of bondage. Luke described a situation which was more than just being of service to another person or working for hire. The servant belonged to the Centurion; he was part of the officer's estate.
2. He was concerned about his servant. The text makes it clear that the Centurion placed great value upon the life of this servant. No one concerned themselves about a slave. Their price was not high and they were replaceable without great financial strain. Romans thought of slaves as tools, replaceable property. Here was a rich, powerful man who had time and concern for people considered inhuman in that culture. This word for "servant" meant "bond-servant." This was a slave who chose to remain a servant of his master although he could be freed. Luke has described something about the relationship between the Centurion and the servant.
3. He acted to get help for his critically ill servant.

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4. His reputation, among Jewish elders, was such that they urged Jesus to help the Centurion because they believed that he really deserved to be helped. This was amazing that Jewish people would care this much for a Roman officer.
5. The Jewish elders counted the Centurion "worthy." The word for worthy "axios" "!" "azio" means befitting, to be of value, to be becoming of the person. In our culture we would express it in these terms, "well, if anybody deserves it, he certainly does."
6. He, a Roman officer, built a synagogue for the Jews, over whom he enforced Roman rule. Romans held a deep-seated hatred for the rebellious Jews. They considered them troublemakers. Here was a Roman who had a special understanding for the Jews; a special place in his heart for them. Some think he built the synagogue for them because he was a convert to Judaism. If so, you can well understand just how great a man he was. He would have to risk his position and future to take such a stand.
7. He loved Israel. The building of the synagogue, the support of the Jewish community leaders, the support of the community all suggest that here is an unusual Roman and one who had a heart for them and their worship.
8. He was humble. He did not consider himself worthy to come to Jesus. If he had come to Jesus, he would have made Jesus unclean and he did not feel that he was important enough to put Jesus through such an ordeal.
 - a. He respected the Jewish belief that they were to have nothing to do with Gentiles. He sent the Jewish community leaders to Jesus so that the help could be gained for his servant without subjecting Jesus to the problems of being in contact with a Gentile. Whether these rules made sense to the Centurion, he respected them enough to send Jews to Jesus rather than to go himself. Roman officers tended to feel that they were important enough to meet anyone whether it created religious problems for that individual or not.
 - b. He saw himself as a Gentile, and knew that the Jews thought of them as a lower category of persons. It would be hard to believe the centurion thought that way, but he did respect it and refused to put Jesus on the spot by his presence.
9. He believed in the power of Jesus. The centurion was a man who understood power. He believed that Jesus had the power to heal the servant. This is the reason that he sent the Jews to seek Jesus' help. Though many Jews did not believe in Jesus' power, the Centurion did.
10. He believed in the authority of Jesus. This man understood authority. The centurions were the backbone of the Roman army. He described it himself. He said to one man "go" and that man goes. He says to another, "come," and that man comes. Authority is not just the ability to force a person to do something. It is the ability to speak and make things happen. This is the same image created in Genesis chapter one where God spoke and a world came into existence.
11. He was considerate of Jesus. Notice that the man sent for Jesus, but then sent word out to tell Jesus to just speak the word and his servant would be healed. This was amazing consideration for a Roman officer. If the Centurion had not sent another group out, Jesus would have made himself unclean by going into the house of a Gentile. The Centurion, who is nameless, was concerned enough about Jesus that he sent people out

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to make sure that Jesus did not create a problem for himself by entering a Gentile home.

12. He was a man of great faith. Jesus gave that evaluation. So strongly did Jesus respect the man's faith that He said,

I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel. Luke 7:10

Here was a Gentile, a conqueror of Israel, whose faith Jesus had not seen equaled in all His years in Israel.

Luke then included a verse we often overlook. Notice what Luke said,

Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well. Luke 7:10

The Centurion believed that if Jesus would just speak the word, the servant would be healed. Jesus did not so much as touch the servant. There is no mention of the fact that Jesus ever said the word of authority and power, but still they found the man well. This is an expression of the greatness of the faith of the Centurion, but also an expression of the greatness of the power and authority of Jesus.

7:11-17 - The Raising of the Widow's Son

Having healed the Centurion's servant, it appears that Jesus stayed in Capernaum for a short time. Notice how Luke wrote about it:

Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. Luke 7:11

Nain was a town about twenty miles to the south west of Capernaum. The population of the area was low. Its rocky surface made it a poor prospect for raising crops. This was not a long trip. People could walk that distance easily in a day and they were accustomed to doing so. It is not surprising that a large crowd from Capernaum decided to go with Him to Nain.

Luke gives us careful detail about the widow whose son had died. Notice the information Luke provides.

As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out - the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." Luke 7:12, 13

Luke tells us that "he was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." A widow who had other children could manage to survive. Luke suggests she was a widow whose only son was in this coffin. This means that she had no visible means of support or position in the community. A woman had no stature in the community. She could not represent herself in legal transactions and if she had no husband or son, she was isolated even within a large community of people. There was no way she could do enough farming to make a living for herself. It is not surprising that Luke tells us she was crying. She cried for the loss of her son, but she also cried for her loss of identity and her only hope of survival in the community. She was destitute in a way that only a widow in her situation could understand.

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Notice that Jesus' first reaction was one of compassion, "Don't cry." This is the picture of Jesus that surfaces repeatedly throughout this Gospel record. I suspect that many people had told her not to cry, but that kind of advice is not costly. The problem was that they could not tell her how to do that, in view of her situation. Jesus not only told her not to cry, He did something about the horrendous situation in which she found herself.

Notice that a large crowd accompanied her out of the city with the coffin. She was probably a member of a large family and they were all taking their responsibility seriously to be with her in her time of need. For a widow, this was most unusual. Often, a widow would just have to shift for herself.

Notice the spot in which Jesus found Himself. Here was a crowd who had come with Him from Capernaum. They had seen Him heal the servant of the Centurion of that region. They knew that He had the power to do this. He met a person who is not just sick; the man has died during this day and they are on their way to inter the body. The emotions are strong. Imagine the tremendous shock that this widow experienced when her only means of support and identity was taken away. The people who came with Jesus were expectant because they had seen His power to heal the servant. They expected Jesus to do something about what appeared to be an impossible situation.

Jesus shocked everyone present. Look at the report of Luke:

*Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still.
He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" Luke 7:14*

This was a shock. If possible, no Jewish person would touch a coffin. Jesus walked right up and touched the coffin on purpose. This was a shock because to touch a coffin or anything in which there was a dead body would make a person unclean. Every Rabbi tried to stay clean always; to be free from contamination so that he could participate with those whom he was training. Jesus willingly touched the coffin. It made Him ceremonially unclean, but it also afforded Him an opportunity to show a miracle to the multitudes gathered there on this important occasion.

The restoration did not come about because of anything that Jesus did, but because of what He said. He commanded the boy to "get up!" This is the ultimate power and authority Jesus showed in the lives of people.

To the surprise of all, the young man sat up. The word for "young man" - "neaniske," "νεανίσκος," describes a young man in the prime of his life. This is the age person who was just right for military service. The young man in question would be old enough to take responsibility for the care of his mother. Certainly she had counted on that, but suddenly found that it was all in vain. Nevertheless, the young man sat up when Jesus spoke. Notice that the young man did not just sit up, he also began to talk. This is significant in that he could carry on a normal life, despite what had happened to him recently.

Notice the way Luke recounts the details:

The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. Luke 7:15.

Look again at the map on the previous page. You will notice the location of the city of Nain. Look again at the map in this chapter and find the town called Zarephath. This town, between Tyre and Sidon, is directly to the north of Nain. Look at the story in I

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Kings 17:7-24. In that story, Elijah prayed for the son of the widow in whose house he had stayed. After the boy had been raised to life again, the author of I Kings put it this way:

Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive." I Kings 17:23

Luke, who knew the Old Testament very well, could have had this in mind when he wrote of Jesus, "And Jesus gave him back to his mother." Repeatedly Jesus is portrayed as the parallel to Elijah. This would not have been a great surprise to the Jewish people who lived in this mountainous village. They were quite familiar with what had happened to the widow's son and the parallel with Elijah would have been vivid in their minds.

The response of the crowd was predictable.

They were filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." Luke 7:16

Luke identifies four responses to the miracle Jesus had done:

1. The people were filled with awe. The word translated "awe" is really "fobos" "φόβος" - from which we get our word "phobia." It was originally a military term to describe the emotion a person feels when they know that their position is indefensible and take flight. Eventually it was thought of as reverential awe. This idea continued throughout the writing of the New Testament. These people, having seen the miracle of raising the dead man to life again, realized that this was something God had done and were awed by His power.

2. The people praised God. The people saw Jesus raise a dead man and praised God for it. They got the message that this was an act of God. Did Jesus suggest that He was God? Did they just assume that He was God? Did they get the impression that God worked through Him as He would through a great prophet? The text gives us no information concerning this at all. The thing that is clear is that they attributed what Jesus did to God.

3. They said, "A great prophet is among us." Whatever their understanding of Jesus, it was clear to them that He was at least a great prophet sent from God. This, all by itself, would be enough to make the Pharisees furious. People saw, in Jesus, one through whom God communicated with His people. That meant that they would listen to Him and believe that God was speaking through Him.

4. They said, "God has come to help his people." This is the strongest of the four statements. They were saying, in effect, that in Jesus Christ God has come to do for His people what they couldn't do for themselves. When Jesus came, God came. Imagine what this message did for the Pharisees who were following Him, trying to catch Him in something that they could hold against Him.

In the closing verse of this paragraph, Luke gives a summary reaction to what Jesus had done. He said,

This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country. Luke 7:17

When you think of what Jesus had done, it is not surprising that the news spread so rapidly. That would be the conversation of the whole area. They had never seen anyone raised from the dead before. This meant that the caravans and travellers were the bearers of this news. Devout people from all over the area would be coming just to see Jesus; to see if He might be the Messiah for whom they waited so impatiently.

Imagine yourself as a Pharisee. Think of what the publicity and the emotional involvement of so many of your people, concerning Jesus raising the man from the dead, would do to you. Think about your loss of power. It would be like trying to keep the water from leaking out of a plastic bag with ten holes in it.

7:18-30 - The Disciples of John the Baptist Seek Out Jesus

There are three parts to this paragraph about John the Baptist:

1. 7:18-23 - John's disciples come to Jesus
 2. 7:24-28 - Jesus preaches about John the Baptist
 3. 7:29, 30 - The reaction to Jesus' teaching
1. 7:18-23 - John's disciples come to Jesus

Luke does not tell us directly what caused John to send the disciples to Jesus. There are some hints that we will describe shortly. Notice how John sent his disciples:

John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" Luke 7:18, 19

Matthew 11:2-6 also tells this story. In that account, Matthew tells us,

When John heard what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" Matthew 11:2

This is the only clue we have concerning the reason John sent his disciples to Jesus. Notice that John sent two disciples. Two witnesses were required to verify any statement. Jesus sent His disciples out by two's and so did John. The sending of the disciples seems to have something to do with the fact that John is in prison. Notice what John said,

"Are you the one who was to come or should we expect someone else?" Luke 7:19

This is quite different from his previous statement about Jesus.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, 'a man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' . . . " John 1:29, 30

At the time John baptized Jesus, there was absolutely no doubt in John's mind that Jesus was the Son of God. He even tried to get Jesus to baptize him because he felt unworthy. The passage of time; the unmet expectations concerning the coming of the kingdom and

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the time spent in prison appear to have made a difference in the thinking of John and he began to wonder if Jesus was what and who he thought He was.

The devout Jews had waited with great expectation for the coming of their Messiah. This is precisely the question with which John was dealing.

"Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else."

Luke 7:20

These Jews had waited for generations for the coming of their Messiah. Though they had waited for the wrong reasons, on occasion, still they anticipated His coming. John was simply confronting Jesus in a deliberate way, asking, "Are you the one?"

Note that Jesus did not chide John for the faltering of his understanding. Jesus simply took the questions seriously.

Luke paints the background so that his readers would understand the framework in which the question was received. Luke said,

At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. Luke 7:21

This was Luke's way of saying that this whole episode took place in the midst of the demonstration of many miracles that no one could miss. Nevertheless, the disciples of John asked the pertinent question, "Are you the one? ..." The disciples of John should have been able to see that indeed, Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah. Still, Jesus answered the questions.

Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me. Luke 7:22b, 23

The things that Jesus pointed out about the nature of His ministry give us hints concerning the nature of John's question. John asked, "Are you the one?" Jesus responded by listing the miraculous things He had been doing all over Palestine. The question, whether in the mind of John or of his disciples, was whether they had misplaced their trust in Jesus as the Messiah. The things that Jesus highlighted for John's disciples were things that the Jews expected their Messiah to be able to perform. In Isaiah 35:4-7, the prophet lists some evidences that will prove that the Messiah is real. Interestingly, they are the same kind of things listed by Jesus in Luke 7:22, 23. The Messiah was to do the marvelous things, which only the Messiah could do, and then proclaim himself Messiah, rather than the other way around. He was saying, the things I have done speak for themselves. There is no reason to doubt what had already happened.

Jesus' closing remark stands out in our minds,

"... Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

Luke 7:23

This is the picture of an understanding Jesus. He knew that it would be hard for John the Baptist to continue to believe, while he languished in prison, even though the truth had been revealed to him by God. Jesus, therefore, spoke kindly, understandingly, to those

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who heard Him. He wanted them to know that He understood their impatience and struggle with the imprisonment. He was trying to encourage both John and his disciples.

Luke does not tell us what affect Jesus' answer had on the disciples of John, but when they had left to go back to John, Jesus talked to the crowd about who John really was. Jesus said,

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." I tell you, among those born of women, there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. Luke 7:24-28

Read that passage again. It may not seem so, but it is a very forceful statement. In the questions Jesus asked, He was making some confrontive statements about the religious leaders of that day. Notice the questions Jesus asked.

1. Did you go out to the desert to see a reed swayed by the wind? The religious leaders of that day seemed more concerned about their political position of power than their religious fervor. If retaining their place of power meant bending with the pressures of the day, then they would bend. In the question, Jesus was affirming that John was not one of those who would compromise his convictions in favor of power.
2. Did you go out to the desert to see "a man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces." This is a negative statement and was made quite forcefully. The Pharisees and other religious leaders of the Jews were known for their sumptuous clothes and luxurious dwellings. These people knew that they did not go out into the desert to see the likes of the extravagant religious leaders, but one who was more concerned about obedience to God than the luxury of physical surroundings.
3. "What did you go out to see? A prophet?" This, of course, was exactly what Jesus was leading up to in the first place. Jesus took a serious risk by saying this about John. John was now in prison because he had prophesied against the ruler of the land. Jesus now made a strong defense of John as a prophet of God which implied, without saying so, that the ruler had not just taken a stand against John, but against God whom John represented. Jesus was standing with John and against Herod.

Jesus goes a step further. He not only affirmed that John was a prophet; He identified John with the one singled out in Malachi 3:1. Malachi's statement, made on behalf of "Almighty God," clearly identifies the forerunner, whom Jesus identifies as John, as the one who would be the Herald of the Messiah. The Old Testament clearly attributes this task to Elijah. Jesus is saying that this is the Elijah of whom the Old Testament speaks.

Jesus was affirming two things. Claiming that John spoke prophetically about the coming of Messiah, Jesus was also saying something about Himself. It was His way of saying, when John identified Him as the one who would come, he was identifying himself as the Elijah who is to come.

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Many scholars have pondered Jesus' closing statement about John. Jesus makes two comparisons concerning John:

I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. Luke 7:28

1. Of the people who had been born before that time, none was greater than John. This was a phenomenal statement. This included such great people as Abraham, Joseph, David, Isaiah, Elijah and a host of other great people of God. Notice, Jesus did not say that John was greater than all these. Jesus said that none was greater than John. Nevertheless, this is a wonderful acclaim for John. Jesus then changed the time frame.
2. The person who **"IS"** least in the kingdom of God is greater than John. Jesus is not so much trying to identify the greatest person in the kingdom as He is trying to point out just how great John is without making others feel that there is no place for them to excel in righteousness. Some have contended that Jesus was saying that a person who was **"in"** the kingdom had to be greater than the one who only heralded its coming. The weakness of this position is that it assumes that John was not part of that kingdom. There is no firm evidence to suggest this. My understanding of this statement is that Jesus was trying to highlight the greatness of John the Baptist, at a time when he was held in low esteem by officials. Jesus was not focusing on the comparisons with other faithful individuals.

The closing two sentences in this paragraph, 7:29, 30, report the reaction to the teaching of John by different groups. Jesus does this by means of a severe contrast. The word "but," at the beginning of verse 30, points to this contrast. Luke draws a strong contrast between the thinking of the outcasts, tax collectors, prostitutes and other outlaws, on the one hand and the religious leaders on the other. If you read carefully, you will notice that Jesus puts all the people on one side of this contrast and the Pharisees all by themselves on the other side.

*(All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)
Luke 7:29, 30*

Luke tells us, in this parenthesis, that "all the people, even the tax collectors, acknowledged that God's way was right." The reason behind this conclusion was that they had been baptized by John. There was nothing inherent in the baptism of John that would lead them to this conclusion. The mention of the baptism is not the emphasis on a ceremony, but upon a change of heart and life that is symbolized by that baptism.

On the other hand, Luke points to the thinking of the Pharisees, "and the experts in the law." These learned men rejected God's purpose for themselves because they had not been baptized. Again, Luke was not pointing to the fact that they lacked the ceremony, but that the change in life had not taken place in them as it had in the rest of the people, especially the tax collectors. Put yourself into the position of the Pharisees. The people in the land that they hated the most, were the tax collectors. Jesus stuns the crowd by saying that these converted moral outcasts had greater spiritual insights than the men most trained in the understanding of the law of God. The problem is that Jesus' statement was painfully

true. There were probably many tax collectors who had a deeper desire to love and serve God than many, if not all, of the Pharisees and trained interpreters of the Law.

7:31-35 - Jesus Condemns a Fault-Finding Generation

These verses contain a stinging indictment of the generation as a whole. Though Jesus had no little children of His own, He must have watched them carefully whenever they were around. Again, Jesus employs His favorite teaching technique. He pointed to something that the people know very well to illustrate a parallel truth that they did not know well at all. Children were, and still are, very important in that culture. They had all seen and heard this kind of behavior coming from little children. Their attention focuses around the things they want. They are very self-centered. Jesus then levels a blast at these people as He compares their reaction to John the Baptist and Himself. John the Baptist came and lived the most austere type of lifestyle and the people complained about it. Jesus came doing the very things these complainers wanted and their reaction was that they blamed Jesus and accused Him of gross misconduct when He did the very things they wanted to see in the life of John the Baptist. In effect, Jesus was saying, "come on, make up your mind!" Jesus' last statement finalized the indictment.

But wisdom is proved right by all her children. Luke 7:35

People can agree or disagree about their positions, but in the end, the thing that is most telling is what happens in the lives of those who follow the teaching under consideration. Jesus was saying, "I am willing to stand my disciples, tax collectors and former prostitutes, up against the disciples of the Pharisees any time." The results, not the arguments, are what really counts.

7:36-50 - The Sinful Woman Anoints Jesus

In this passage, Jesus was invited to a dinner in a Pharisee's home. The question immediately arises, Why would the Pharisee invite Jesus to eat with him? There are several possibilities:

1. Perhaps he was a secret disciple - his treatment of Jesus raises questions about this possibility.
2. He could have been trying to find out more about Jesus.
3. He could have been setting a trap for Jesus.
4. He could have been patronizing or treating Jesus condescendingly.

The latter seems to fit the circumstances best. Later, the text will explain that the Pharisee neglected several very important social customs when Jesus came into his house. This suggests condescension. It can also show just how far the Pharisees were willing to go to trap Jesus.

There is another area where patronization was present. In that culture, when two people were at odds, if there was a desire to end the conflict, one would invite the other to eat with him. This was one of their symbols of forgiveness. To invite Jesus into his home, the Pharisee forgave Jesus of anything he thought the Master had done. Everyone who heard about this meal would understand it in that light. He was identifying himself with

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Jesus completely. That would be hard for most of the Pharisees. For whatever reason, he invited Jesus into his home to the certain surprise of those who knew about it.

Notice how Luke identifies the woman who came into the house:

...When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town ... Luke 7:37a

It is reasonable to believe that she was a prostitute. The word Luke used for "sinner" is one that was usually used to describe not just error, but error of a specific immoral identity. That was as low as a person could get in the eyes of devout Jews. Luke goes on to say that she lived her sinful life in this town. It is absolutely certain that every adult in town would know her sordid reputation. Just to see her walking down the street brought twinges of guilt to several men, perhaps some of those in the room at this very moment.

This was not a secret get-together. The sinful woman came because she heard that Jesus was going to be eating with the Pharisee. The first question that came to my mind was, "How could this woman get into the home of the Pharisee?" Just her presence in the house made it unclean. That meant that a great deal of effort was necessary to cleanse the house and the people so that they would be acceptable in the temple again. If there were any possible way to keep her out, they would want to find it; unless, of course, they wanted her to be there to see what Jesus would do. We can only conjecture about this idea. We do know that when a distinguished Rabbi was a guest, all sorts of people came in to listen to the important things that he might say. If this is the situation here, then people might wonder why **this** woman would come into the Pharisee's house. On the other hand, they would not be surprised that others might come to listen.

Luke went to particular pains to identify the fact that the sinful woman brought a gift.

...She brought an alabaster jar of perfume,... Luke 7:37b

This would be interesting because of the nature of her background and profession. We need to note, however, that this was a very special kind of perfume. The literal word here is "muron" "μύρον" and means ointment, or to flow. The ointment in question was myrrh. It was a special ointment which was used to prepare a body for burial. In Matthew's account, Matthew 26:6 f.f., Jesus said that she had done this to prepare Him for His burial. Jesus came in contact with myrrh more than once. When the eastern rulers came, at the time of His birth, one of them brought myrrh. In each instance it was a symbol pointing to the fact that Jesus would die, and this on behalf of His people. The ointment was placed in the very best jar available. It was made of alabaster. It was a soft stone, but difficult to carve and costly to prepare.

Luke identifies her place in the room. He said,

And as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Luke 7:38a

Because everything was hand made, housing facilities were at a premium. We should remember that they were being entertained in the home of a Pharisee. This Pharisee had to be a person of substantial wealth. In a place where houses were small, this house probably had a guest area where at least 15 men could lie down to eat comfortably.

The guests of honor would be lying to the left and right of the host. The place at the left of the host was the most honored position. Though the text does not say, we assume

that Jesus occupied this position. The second most honored guest would be lying to the right of the host - Simeon. The text does not tell us who occupied this other position.

Luke confirms that the woman was standing behind Jesus crying. This was the uncontrolled weeping that accompanied the loss of a loved one. It was an intense form of sorrow. People were hired to mourn uncontrollably at a funeral. It is fair to assume that this was intense sorrow for her former life.

During her intense mourning, this unidentified woman wet Jesus' feet with her tears. We know that tears have a cleansing effect because of their makeup. Her purpose in washing His feet with her tears was that of gratitude, thankfulness that this one individual in the community saw her as a person of worth.

Luke also reports that she dried his feet with her hair. In that culture women did not cut their hair. It was allowed to grow long. When a woman married, she fastened her hair on top of her head and it was never seen loose again. To do so would be most inappropriate and considered highly improper. Sometimes, it was a way to identify a woman of ill-repute.

Despite the cultural prohibition, this woman took her long hair and dried Jesus' feet. It was more important to show her concern for His unwashed feet than it was to maintain the cultural prohibition against having her hair down.

Luke also said that the woman kissed Jesus' feet. A more accurate way to translate this portion would be to say, "she was kissing His feet." It is an action which was begun and continued. By the way, the word "kiss" means to kiss intensely. It is the same word that was used to describe the way Judas kissed Jesus. This woman kissed Jesus' feet strongly and more than once. It was an action that carried deep emotion. We know that people often showed their deep appreciation and devotion for a beloved Rabbi by kissing his feet. It is entirely possible that this was the message of the woman's actions.

The evil woman touching Jesus startled the Pharisee, but the anointing of Jesus' feet with the myrrh apparently shocked even the disciples of Jesus. Both Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9 tell the story of such a woman. In both of these instances the woman poured the ointment on Jesus' head. This appears, however, to be an account of the same experience. In the accounts of both Matthew and Mark, the disciples were also upset that the costly ointment was "wasted" like this when it could have been used to make provision for the poor.

Luke continues by showing the reaction of the Pharisee. In Luke 7:39, 40 there is a vivid contrast which Luke develops from this experience. First, Luke describes the Pharisee's reaction to what the woman had done. Notice what the Pharisee said to himself.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "if this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is - that she is a sinner." Luke 7:39

How did Luke know what Simon was thinking? We do not know. It is as though Simon was thinking aloud. By devout Jewish standards, the Pharisee was correct. These people believed that a prophet would have this kind of knowledge. In effect, Simon was saying:

1. A prophet would know about this woman.
2. Jesus did not know who she really was.
3. Therefore, Jesus could not possibly be a prophet.

JESUS HEALED CENTURION'S SERVANT; WIDOW'S SON

This story poses a strong contrast. The Pharisee, considered very devout, was questioning Jesus' position as a prophet because he thought Jesus did not know that this woman was an immoral person. Now Jesus reveals something about His knowledge of this Pharisee's thinking. In good Jewish fashion, Jesus did not just blurt out His understanding, but told the man a parable that included the information. Jesus said:

Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said, Luke 7:41, 42

Jesus used this parable to illustrate what He was trying to say. He also used it to put Simon in a position where he had to pass judgment upon himself. Only after Simon had made this conclusion did Jesus say what He really wanted to say to Simon.

Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven - for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." Luke 7:44-47

This was a damaging indictment. The devastation of Jesus' charge grows out of their customs of common courtesy. When a guest was welcomed into a home at least three things must be done for them, especially if the person has been traveling.

1. A servant was expected to wash the guest's feet.
2. The master of the house was to greet the guest with a kiss.
3. The person must have sweet smelling ointment placed on his head to make him feel more comfortable in this very warm climate.

Jesus was chastising the Pharisee because not one of these amenities was offered to Him. In spite of this discourtesy, the Pharisee felt that he was superior to almost everyone else, including Jesus. One cannot say for certain, but it appears that these courtesies were omitted intentionally to chastise or humiliate Jesus. It was a passive way to look down on Jesus.

Simon the Pharisee did not say so, but he was feeling far superior to both Jesus and the sinful woman. Jesus took him to task by showing him that the woman was far more sensitive to His needs than Simon was. She had honored Jesus by washing, kissing, and anointing His feet. The Pharisee could not possibly have missed the sharp rebuttal Jesus gave him.

Having placed all these relationships in their proper perspective, Jesus then turned to deal with the woman's situation. Remember, Jesus is in the home of a Pharisee, and it was probably one who was hostile to Him. Luke records the encounter in these words:

Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Luke 7:48

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Put yourself into the shoes of this sinful woman for a moment. You have been put down and rejected most of your life. Respectable people had nothing to do with you at all. Now Jesus changes all of that. He has declared that you are at least as worthy as the people who claim it the most. In fact, Jesus had made it clear that you have greater sensitivity than the Pharisees, whom most people considered the most religious people in the land. Just how would you react? What would you think about Jesus?

Suddenly, the issue was not which person is acceptable, the Pharisee has already lost on that issue. The issue is who is it that can forgive sins? Notice the reaction of the crowd as Jesus makes this pronouncement.

Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"
Luke 7:48, 49

Somehow or other, the issue always came down to whether Jesus was the Son of God; whether He could forgive sins or was He blaspheming? It seems obvious that these people questioned whether He had the right or ability to forgive sins. They were displaying their doubt about Jesus' deity.

Jesus was not slow to take what others might consider a lonely stand. Notice how Luke reports it:

Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."
Luke 7:50

In the midst of the questions of the crowds, Jesus pronounced the evil woman forgiven. She was no longer guilty of all she had done. This would be very difficult for the Jewish people, especially for the Pharisee. They wanted to be able to blame her for her sinful lifestyle. They wanted to be able to reject her. Jesus took that all away and said, "Your sins are forgiven." They can shut her out, but it cannot be because she is guilty of anything in the sight of God. She is clean and guiltless.

Jesus concluded the conversation about the evil woman who intruded into the cleansed home of the Pharisee by wishing her God's peace. This had to be a strange feeling for the woman. This was a special blessing for the Jewish people. Probably no one bothered saying the blessing to her. No one would wish her peace. They might wish her death or judgment, but never peace. Jesus, oblivious of her evil past, wished her the peace which God can give.

Conclusion

It isn't said aloud very often, but the Pharisees were in that culture what the church and church leaders often appear to be in ours. The indictment of Jesus, in many instances, fits today as it did then. Like the Pharisees, we are often long on denunciation and short on intense obedience.

As each of us looks back over the weaker moments in our lives, there suddenly rises a strong sense of guilt. No one has to say a word of accusation. We accuse ourselves. In the midst of it all, Jesus says to us, as he said to this woman, "Your sins are forgiven." This declaration should be accompanied by a great sense of joy and fulfillment because of all that God has done on our behalf in Jesus Christ. We are forgiven!

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 10

LUKE 8:1-56

JESUS TEACHES AND HEALS IN GALILEE

1. In our best Greek texts of Luke's Gospel, there are ten paragraphs in chapter eight. On the chart below give each paragraph a title of seven words or less.

8:1-3	
8:4-8	
8:9-15	
8:16-18	
8:19-21	
8:22-25	
8:26-39	
9:40-42	
8:43-48	
8:49-56	

2. Scan Luke 8 to identify the locations where Jesus preached. What information do you gain from this search?
3. In 8:1-3, Luke gives the names of some people who travelled with Jesus.
 - a. What were their names?
 - b. In a Bible Dictionary or Encyclopedia, look up each name. What information did you find?
 - c. What does this add to the message of the paragraph?
4. In Luke 8:4-8, Jesus taught by means of a parable.
 - a. Why did he use parables to teach?
 - b. Study the parable of the sower. What observations can you make about this?
 - c. When teaching in a parable, Jesus often concluded by saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." What did He mean?
5. In Luke 8:9-15, Jesus explained the parable He told in 8:4-8.
 - a. Jesus explains the reason for this style of teaching in 8:10. What reasons did He give?
 - b. How did Jesus identify the "seed"?
 - c. Identify the meaning of the location of seed in the four illustrations:
 1. Seed that fell along the path.
 2. Seed that fell on the rocks.
 3. Seed that fell among thorns
 4. Seed that fell on good soil.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

- d. Reflect on Jesus' explanation of these seeds. What do you learn from the study?
- 6. In 8:16-18, Jesus used a common situation, that everyone understood, to illustrate a spiritual truth.
 - a. Why would He describe a ridiculous situation?
 - b. What does He say about the Jar?
 - c. What message does this give you?
 - d. What does Jesus say about the bed?
 - e. What message is He trying to convey
 - f. In 8:17, 18, Jesus gives the reason for this parable. What are His reasons?
- 7. In 8:19-21, there is a brief, awkward encounter with Jesus' family.
 - a. Why do you think it mentions Mary and the brothers, but does not mention Joseph?
 - b. Put yourself in Mary's position and then read the paragraph. What did Mary feel?
 - c. Put yourself in the younger brothers position and then read this paragraph again. How did they feel?
 - d. In 8:21, what was Jesus saying about Mary and His brothers? Why?
- 8. Luke records the stilling of the storm in 8:22-25.
 - a. Put yourself in the shoes of these frightened disciples. The sea appeared to be about to destroy your boat and Jesus is asleep in the back of the boat. How would you feel?
 - b. Again, put yourself in their shoes. You are certain you are drowning, but Jesus gets up and by giving a command, the sea becomes quiet. What would you think?
 - c. Again, you are still stunned because of the miracle that happened when Jesus spoke to the wind. Then Jesus said, "Where is your faith?" How would you feel? What would go through your mind?
 - d. What did the disciples mean, in 8:25, when they said, "Who is this?"
- 9. In 8:26-39. Luke describes the healing of the demoniac.
 - a. Luke said, "For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. What does this information tell us?
 - b. Why was it important for Jesus to ask the demon's names? What difference does it make?
 - c. Divide a piece of paper in half, top to bottom.
 - 1. On one side list all the information this paragraph provides about Jesus.
 - 2. On the other side, list all the information provides about the demons.
 - 3. Study these lists. What did you learn from this study?
 - d. What is the significance of the pigs in this paragraph?
 - e. What is the significance of the Demon's identification of Jesus?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 10

- f. What did Luke stress when he indicated that the demons went into the pigs and the pigs went into the sea?
 - g. Put yourself in the place of the people of the town. You have just learned that your investment in pigs has just become a total loss. You know this demoniac and his frightening story too well. You come to the site of your tragic loss and you see the man sitting clothed, quiet and in full control of his senses. What would you think? What would you do?
 - h. Put yourself in the place of the delivered demoniac. You are free, for the first time, of demon-possession. You are thrilled about Jesus and what He has done. You make a decision to go with Him, but He said "no!" How would you feel?
10. 8:40-42 finds Jesus on the west side of the Sea of Galilee again. In these three verses, Luke begins to tell the story of Jairus' daughter.
- a. What difference did it make that Jairus was "a ruler of the synagogue?"
 - b. Luke tells us that the girl was 12 years of age. How would this information help us?
 - c. Luke said this girl was an "only daughter." What difference would that make?
 - d. How did Jesus respond to the request of Jairus?
11. Luke, in 8:43-48, tells the story of the woman with the issue of blood.
- a. What is the significance of the fact that she had had this ailment 12 years?
 - b. Compare Luke's account of this story, Luke 8:43-48, with Mark's account, Mark 5:25-34. What differences do you find?
 - c. Why would she come up behind Jesus to touch His clothing?
 - d. Why would she want to touch Jesus' clothes?
 - e. Study Jesus' response after the woman touched His clothing. Was he being picky? Why the fuss?
 - g. Put yourself into the woman's situation. How would you feel?
 - h. Put yourself into the disciples' place. You are being jostled by the crowd and suddenly Jesus said, "Who touched me?" How would you feel?
 - i. In 8:47, why did the woman tremble when she admitted that she was the one who touched Jesus' clothing?
 - j. In 8:48, Jesus called this woman "Daughter." Why would He do that?
 - k. If you were that healed woman, how would you feel when Jesus said, "Daughter, go in peace"?
12. In 8:49-56, Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead.
- a. What difference does it make that the story of the woman with the issue of blood cuts this story into two parts?

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- b. If you were Jairus and your servant came to tell you your daughter was dead, but Jesus continued on to your house as if the message had not been received, how would you feel?
 - c. Your name is Jairus. What would you think, knowing your daughter was dead and then Jesus said to you, "Don't be afraid; just believe and she will be healed"?
 - d. Why do you think Jesus told the people to stop wailing?
 - e. Compare and contrast what Luke tells us about Jesus and the people who were wailing. What have you learned?
 - f. Study the response of Jairus and his wife when their daughter was raised. What does this information tell us about them?
13. Reflect upon this chapter of Luke. In what way does it relate to your life? What difference will this study make in your walk with Christ?

LESSON 10: – LUKE 8:1-56

JESUS TEACHES AND HEALS IN GALILEE

There are 10 paragraphs in the Greek text of Luke chapter 10. They are as follows:

8:1-3	Jesus Preached in Galilee Villages
8:4-8	The Parable of the Sower
8:9-15	Jesus Explains the Parable of the Sower
8:16-18	The Lamp Under the Jar
8:19-21	Jesus Claims New Family - Obedient
8:22-25	Jesus Rebuked the Wind on Sea of Galilee
8:26-39	The Garasene Demoniac Healed
8:40-42	Jairus Pleads With Jesus - Heal Daughter
8:43-48	The Woman with the Issue of Blood
8:49-56	Jesus Raised Jairus' Daughter From Dead

8:1-3 - Jesus Preached in Galilee Villages

As Luke begins chapter eight, the wording suggests that there was a time lapse following the dinner at the home of the Pharisee. There is a definite shift in the content between the two chapters. Notice how Luke describes Jesus' preaching mission.

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God... Luke 8:1

We tend to think of communities of thousands of people. In that part of Israel, villages were very small. A tiny village might consist of only a few families. The landscape was dotted with these little settlements in this part of Galilee. Jesus could have gone to the large metropolitan areas, but He chose to take His message to the very common people. He did not wait for the people to come to Him, but went from one village to another to talk with them.

Jesus was on a preaching mission. It is interesting that Luke does not mention Jesus preaching in a synagogue on this trip. Some scholars assume that by this time Jesus had been forbidden to speak in the synagogues of Galilee. Jesus had to teach in the fields and open areas rather than in the synagogue which was their custom. It is an indication that the resistance to Jesus had already begun to mount.

Jesus was not traveling alone. He had already chosen the twelve disciples and they were traveling / learning from Him all during this preaching time. The things He said; the way He related to people in need: all these things were making a strong impression on the 12 as well as the others who followed Him.

Luke gives us the names of three of the women who followed Jesus. Look carefully at these three women and you can learn something about Jesus' followers:

1. **MARY MAGDALENE** - Mary was apparently a Jewish woman from Magdala. Luke further identifies her as the woman from whom Jesus had cast seven demons. Some scholars suggest that Mary had been a prostitute in the past. This cannot be confirmed or denied.

2. JOANNA THE WIFE OF CUZA - Joanna, the feminine form of John, was the wife of the steward for Herod Agrippa. A steward was the manager of the entire household, the overseer of all that belonged to Agrippa. This was a highly trusted position. You may remember that Joseph held this position as he served Pharaoh in Egypt. This was a very prominent woman in Israel.

Joanna had been cured of a serious illness and delivered from the possession of evil spirits. Along with Mary Magdalene, she was a disciple of Jesus. She accompanied Him on his final trip from Northern Galilee to Jerusalem. She was present at the crucifixion while His disciples either hid or fled. This gives one an impression of her courage and faithfulness. She was present for the entombment of Jesus and helped prepare the herbs and spices for His body. She was there with the women who first discovered that Jesus was risen. She was also present when the women told the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead (Luke 23, 24).

3. SUSANNA - Little is known of Susanna. She comes from a Jewish family in Judah. She was present with Mary Magdalene and Joanna at the Cross and the discovery of the empty tomb.

These three along with "many others" helped to provide financially for Jesus and the disciples during their ministry. Some people are shocked by this information. One can only say that it was not unusual for wealthy women to assist in the care of well known rabbis.

8:4-8 - The Parable of the Sower

Jesus told this parable as a large crowd gathered from many different cities and villages to hear Him. The use of parables to teach was a common teaching tool of the Rabbi's. Jesus was master of the craft. The parable was a way to take something common, something obvious, and use it to illustrate a truth that was much more complicated and not as well understood. These people had all seen farmers planting grain. It is reasonable to assume that many of them may have done this task themselves. This general area was the breadbasket, the part of Israel where they grew the most grain. Jesus used it to teach them some important spiritual truths.

Notice in this parable, Jesus described four different kinds of soil, which were prevalent in Israel, and four results from planting in that kind of soil.

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. Along the path | trampled; birds ate it |
| 2. Fell on the rocks | plants grew and withered - no moisture |
| 3. Fell among thorns | thorns choked plants |
| 4. Fell on good soil | came up and yielded a crop |

Notice that there are more ways for the crop to fail than there are for the crop to succeed. This is a basic Biblical principle concerning growth. We need to be alert because there are more ways we can fail than there are by which we can succeed in spiritual growth. Nevertheless, the way to growth is available if we really want to grow.

Notice also that the means of failure are natural things. They are not highly unusual. All these conditions could be seen in almost any community in Galilee. These types of soil were everywhere. Jesus gave them a warning against the things that would hamper their spiritual growth. He also instructed them concerning the way to grow if they really

want to do so. Jesus made it clear that the seed would only produce a crop if it fell in good soil. You need two things for spiritual growth: 1. Good seed. 2. good soil. which resulted from the grain planted in the fourth kind of soil was very bountiful - a hundred fold. That is a great harvest!

Having said this, Jesus simply cried out:

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Luke 8:8b

This was a way of saying that the parable ended and that the people should have been able to understand what Jesus meant from what He said. It was customary for a Jewish Rabbi to give some of the information that he wanted to convey. He also left some for the disciple to grasp by his own reflection. This is precisely what Jesus was doing. We might say it something like this, "If you hear what I have said, then think about it; let it change your life.

8:9-15 - Jesus Explains the Parable of the Sower

The disciples knew that Jesus was not talking about farming. It was clear to them that He had used a common farming experience to illustrate a spiritual truth. They did not understand, however, what spiritual truth Jesus was attempting to illustrate. The disciples stated it in these terms:

His disciples asked him what this parable meant. Luke 8:9

This was not a deep complicated parable. Nevertheless, the disciples did not understand. In one sense, it is to our benefit that they did not understand. While seeking clarification from Jesus, light was also shed on another topic. Notice how Jesus answered them.

...The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak parables, so that "though seeing, they may not see; though hearing they may not understand." Luke 8:10

In His answer, Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 6:9. It is a reminder that there is a difference between the effect of Scripture being read by Christians and Scripture being read by unbelievers. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to reveal the meaning of Scripture to those who believe and seek to obey God. On the other hand, it is also the ministry of the Spirit to deal with truth so that those who have no desire to love and obey God do not comprehend the message of revealed Scripture. We must be clear that this is not a divine plan to keep sinners in spiritual darkness. It is rather God's way of not "casting pearls before swine." God would be overjoyed if these people were eager to learn the truth. They have no desire for truth. God is simply allowing people to have their own desires. Check the Scriptures, much of what we call judgment, is simply God letting people have what they unwisely desire.

Jesus explained the parable to His disciples in clear terms. He said.

This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. Luke 8:11

In this statement, Jesus is saying that He has been teaching through the means of a simile. A simile is a figure of speech which uses something well known to express a resemblance to something that is not. Jesus spoke of seed, which was very well known, to convey

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intricate information about the "word of God" which was less well known. Jesus said several things about the "word of God" in this parable. He said,

Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they cannot believe and be saved. Luke 8:12

This same parable was told Matthew 13:2-9 and Mark 4:3-9. Both Matthew and Mark, in dealing with the seed that fell by the path, mention the idea that Birds ate the seed. Luke, however speaks of the word from the hearts of those who heard. This led to their inability to believe and be saved. This is not surprising since Luke shows an intense concern for salvation. In Luke's account, note the contrast between God's purpose and the devil's. God sends the word of God so that people might be saved. The devil, on the other hand, takes away the word of God so that the people might **not** be saved. This highlights the difference between God and the devil. In either instance, the person heard the word, but because the word was removed, whether by birds or by the devil, the person was unable to come to faith in Christ.

The second kind of seed, to which Jesus refers in the parable, is that which falls on the rocks. Jesus spoke of it in these terms:

Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. Luke 8:13

These people have clearly heard the word of God. They have chosen to follow Jesus, but as Jesus said, "...they have no root." The scenario that Jesus was describing was one in which the forgiven person was more involved in the joy of forgiveness than in the purpose of it. The consequences of this choice are always destruction. As happens so often, the point of demarcation is the onset of opposition. Belief seems to be dependant upon joy rather than on purpose. Persecution tends to diminish the joy and challenge the purpose. When this is not in place, defection is usually the result. Jesus was warning about that danger.

The third kind of seed is that which fell among thorns.

The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. Luke 8:14

Jesus was dealing very specifically with life as they experienced it. There were many who heard the message clearly. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Unfortunately, they were not willing to make Jesus and His kingdom the top priority of their lives. In such a situation the inevitable result is that their top priorities - position, reputation, the accumulation of money and things -crowd out their new found faith. This results in the extinction of their faith in Christ. The results of faith are never realized.

The fourth kind of seed is described in contrast to the other three.

But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persecution produce a crop. Luke 8:15

In this instance, the seed - the Scriptures - encountered good ground, a heart that was willing to allow the Scriptures to control all of life. The good heart was identified by several qualities"

1. It was a good heart
2. They hear the word
3. They retain the word
4. They endure persecution in order to allow faith to mature.

It is this quality and style of life to which Jesus calls each of us.

I suspect that several, who would otherwise be eager to learn more from Jesus, would be turned away by the notion that the endurance of persecution produces maturity. There are many who are willing to become spiritually mature. Most of them, however, are unwilling to undergo the opposition which is the environment in which spiritual growth takes place.

The seed, in each instance, was the same. The problem was not with the quality of the seed. The difference was in the preparedness of the soil. This was a very dynamic statement by Jesus. The lack of spiritual growth is and was a problem to every individual. Jesus was saying that the cause lies in the hearer. The nature of the problem may be varied, but in each case one needs to look within to find the source of failure.

This parable may seem like a strange thing to insert into Jesus' teaching, but the people who listened to Him would disagree. Jesus used a common experience that they would understand very well to give them insight into a life experience with which they were not very familiar.

8:16-18 - The Lamp Under the Jar

Jesus continued with the use of another parable. In this parable, Jesus described a ridiculous situation, it was something that no sane person would ever do. Jesus made the forceful statement in these words:

No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. Luke 8:16

Again, this sounds strange to us, but it was a familiar figure to those who heard Jesus speak. They knew all about the "jar" and the "stand." They had all used both. The "jar, of which Jesus spoke, was a large clay pot with two holes in the top. These people had fire, but they did not have matches. To maintain the flame, they would place the lamp inside this pot. The reduction of oxygen inside the pot would reduce the consumption of oil, but allow it to burn enough to preserve the flame. This procedure shed almost no light, but it preserved the flame. On the other hand, when a person wanted to increase the level of light in a room in the evening, they would place the lamp on a stand or shelf high on the wall. The higher the stand/shelf on the wall, the more light dispersed through the room.

Jesus' words were strong. He was saying, in effect, no individual with an ounce of sense would place a lamp in the "pot" to get light in the room. Nevertheless, some believers would use means designed to protect the light one has to share the light. It will not work.

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There is a second image in this verse. Jesus speaks of placing a lamp under a bed. Most Jews of that day did not sleep in beds and never had. They slept on a mat that was rolled out on the floor each evening when they retired. Many Arabs in Palestine, even today, do not sleep in beds. Though these people had never slept in a bed, they knew what they were. These luxuries were the furniture of the rich. To place a lamp under a bed could serve only one useful purpose - to warm the bed. It would be useless as a source of light. The message Jesus presented was exactly the same. A sensible person would never place a lamp under a bed to shed light in the house, but devout Jews used several means to preserve the light which came from God for themselves rather than share it with the gentiles.

Verse 17 purports to be an explanation for the assertion in verse 16. It begins with the word "for." Notice what Jesus said,

For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. Luke 8:17

Try as they would to keep the light to themselves, the Jews would ultimately fail. God intended them to share this light with all mankind. Trying to be superior and unique, they kept it for themselves. Jesus was simply announcing that this effort was doomed to failure.

Verse 18 is a warning stated as a conclusion. It begins with the word "therefore." Jesus said,

Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him. Luke 8:18

Jesus was saying that based on what He had already said, they need to be most careful how they listen. It is like saying, I want you to listen carefully; this is very important. It was and is important because people tend to feel that they can listen selectively without a problem. Jesus was saying just the opposite. The principle can be found in many areas. The person who struggles to gain more knowledge, will receive that and more, but the person who is satisfied with what he has already learned will lose even the small portion that he has. This can also be applied to the area of spiritual growth. It is a clear warning of what will happen if they do not seek God and keep on seeking Him.

8:19-21 - Jesus Claims New Family - Obedient

In the midst of this teaching situation, Jesus was interrupted by the arrival of His mother and brothers. Notice the way Luke describes their arrival:

Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Luke 8:19

Notice that there is no mention of Joseph, but clear reference to Mary and the brothers. Tradition has it that Joseph, who may have been much older than Mary, died when Jesus had barely passed the age of 12 when Jesus would be considered a man. Tradition also has it that Jesus therefore became the sole provider for His mother and His half brothers. If that tradition were true, it could account for the fact that Mary and the boys are mentioned, but Joseph was not. We do not know for sure.

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This whole section takes place in one of the villages of Galilee. Mary and her other sons had travelled from Nazareth to see Jesus. When they arrived, they were unable to see Him because there were so many people crowded around Him. Word finally got to Jesus that His family was present.

Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." Luke 8:20

There are two possibilities to account for the fact that Mary and Jesus' brothers were "standing outside." As the previous verse suggests, it could be that there were just too many people present to allow them to get to Jesus. It could also be that they stood outside waiting to be invited inside. This is possible, but less likely. True, a person would always wait outside a home to be invited inside. When a famous Rabbi was visiting in a home, however, it was well understood that people could come and go to listen to what he had to teach them. It appears to me that the sheer number of people accounted for the fact that they stood outside.

Jesus' response seems cold and uncaring. One wonders, how could Jesus talk like that?

He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice." Luke 8:21

If you study Jesus' words carefully, obviously He was simply telling the truth. The Scriptures repeatedly teach us that we are children of God and that Jesus Christ is our brother. Paul speaks of us as joint-heirs with Jesus Christ" Romans 8:17. Jesus was saying that family, for Him, was not so much a biological consideration as it was one of lifestyle. His family is identified by the fact that the members are willing to hear God's word and do as God taught. For many of us, there is a greater closeness with other Christian people than there is with other members of our biological family. There are a number of scholars who believe that Jesus was disowned when He left His place as the heir of the family and went out to preach. This can not be substantiated.

We must remember that part of what causes people to wonder about Jesus' words is the tradition that there was bad blood between Jesus and His brothers. There is little doubt, for me, that Jesus' half-brothers wondered about His grasp on sanity. They knew that He was Mary's son, yet He claimed to be the Son of God. In Mark 3:21-31, this episode in Jesus' life immediately follows Jesus preaching in Galilee and the people were wondering if he was beside Himself. Elsewhere the brothers spoke disparaging concerning His witness, John 7:3. It seems that Mary and the brothers probably did wonder about Jesus' emotional condition, but Jesus was clearly speaking of spiritual things when He identified His family. Whatever the precise situation within the family, we never again hear Jesus call His mother or to her sons as His brothers.

Notice what Jesus said. An intimate relationship with Jesus is not only secured through prayer and Bible reading, but through a life of intense obedience to the word of God. If you think about this, it is quite different from common thinking of Christian people.

8:22-25 - Jesus Rebuked the Wind on the Sea of Galilee

This is a miracle of Jesus that stands out in the minds of Christians. It is not more miraculous than any other miracle He performed, but it has higher recall than many others.

Notice again, that Luke's casual approach to events is in evidence here. This is the way he described this experience:

One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. Luke 8:22.

The time designation is very general. This was not important to what Luke was writing. He was far more concerned with a careful report of what happened on that occasion. The way Luke reports it, this sounds like a very common uneventful experience. Nothing could be farther from the minds of the disciples. Two things made this a time of great stress for the twelve:

1. They were going over to the Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee. This was an experience of great discomfort to the disciples. In all probability, they had never been on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, or in any Gentile village, before they became Jesus' disciples
2. They were traveling on the Sea of Galilee. Jewish people had a natural fear of bodies of water. They were the only major nation on the Mediterranean that did not have a navy. They were particularly afraid of being on the Sea of Galilee because of the severe storms which could come up almost instantaneously on this body of water. Add to this the fact that their small crafts, were no match for the thunderous conditions they encountered while sailing on this volatile body of water. There were two sizes of fishing boats which plied the waters of this lake. Because there were at least 13 people in this boat, it had to be the larger of the two types. Nevertheless, it was small and responded to the storm more like a cork than a secure sailing vessel. Luke includes two very vivid and important pictures in verse 23.

As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. Luke 8:23

The first was a picture of Jesus asleep in the boat. As we mentioned earlier, Luke had a sensitive eye for the very human side of Jesus. Luke carefully recorded that Jesus grew tired and fell asleep as all of us are prone to do. This picture involves a strong contrast. The disciples were frightened just to be on the water, much less in a storm. Jesus could fall asleep.

The second picture that Luke includes in this verse is one of a violent storm on the Sea of Galilee. Did you notice how Luke described it?

...A squall came down on the lake. Luke 8:23b

This was not a casual word choice. It is surprising to some that the Sea of Galilee is some 600 feet below sea level. Add to this the fact that the area is made up of "table land" beyond which the mountains rise abruptly. The net result of this is the fact that the area around the Sea of Galilee looks a bit like a mixing bowl. There is a natural causeway running from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea straight to the shores of the Sea of Galilee. As the winds come from the Mediterranean and the cold winds from the mountains, one can experience almost instantaneous storms of severe proportions. That is

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precisely what happens. I have seen the Sea of Galilee very calm. In less than an hour the storm was so severe that modern ships were at great risk.

The boat was being swamped because of the size of the waves in comparison to the low sides of the boat itself. Boats of this type have been found, during a recent drought, in the shallows at the southwest corner of the Sea of Galilee. The owners of such boats try never to get caught in the center of the lake during such a storm. This is what happened on this occasion and the disciples were afraid.

Luke, though not present for the experience, gives a graphic picture of what happened.

The disciples went and woke him, saying "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" Luke 8:24a

This was the object of their fear. Jews were not water travellers. They were always afraid of drowning. Their fears were not ill-founded. From the human point of view, it appeared that they were certain to drown. They did the only thing they knew to do, they went to Jesus crying out for help.

There is another contrast between the response of Jesus to the storm and that of the disciples.

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided and all was calm. Luke 8:24b

The disciples panicked; Jesus slept. The disciples did not know what to do; Jesus rebuked the wind and raging waters. The contrast was strong. The things that went through the minds of the disciples might escape our notice. Jesus commanded the forces of nature and they obeyed Him. The Jewish mind would be taken back many centuries when the people of Israel were trapped at the Red Sea. In their dilemma, Israel cried out for help. In that moment of panic, God touched the forces of nature and the waters piled up so that Israel could cross on dry ground. It was just one more way to remind the disciples that Jesus was indeed God. When Jesus spoke, the storm subsided.

The words of Jesus seem abrupt, perhaps caustic. If you read the paragraph again carefully, you will notice that it is not really abrupt, but does go straight to the point.

"Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. Luke 8:25a

We indicated earlier that there was a contrast between Jesus and the disciples. The difference was in their faith. If they had had faith, they would not have panicked. In the absence of faith, they had to hurry and do something to protect themselves. Faith enables people to trust in God rather than feel compelled to preserve themselves.

The response of the disciples was one of astonishment. Note how Luke recorded it:

In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him." Luke 8:25b

The word for "fear" is "phobos", "φόβος". This was originally a military term which described a soldier's flight when he was filled with terror for his life. The disciples had feared the storm, but now they had seen a power greater than the storm and their fear was changed.

The word "amazement", on the other hand, is "thaumazo", "θαυμάζω"; it means to gaze in wonder. It is the result of the shock of discovering something that goes beyond our

understanding of normal situations. The disciples had seen powerful, uncontrolled seas before, but they had never seen anyone successfully command the seas to be calm. It was more than their minds could comprehend.

In their shocked amazement, the disciples spoke in ways which were unfamiliar to them. they said,

Who is this...? Luke 8:25b

This was an unusual question for them to ask. They had known Jesus for quite a while and had been His disciple for a period of time as well. Their question was not so much one of identity as it was a question of His power. The full question reads as follows:

"Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him." Luke 8:25

They had seen magnificent displays of physical and political power. Nature, however, was considered to be a power beyond control. Jesus controlled what was for them the uncontrollable. Add to this the fact that Jesus just spoke and things happened. They considered action in response to command to be superior to physical activity. The fact that Jesus simply spoke and the winds died down was astonishing. In the Hebrew mind the same shock is created when he reads Genesis chapter one, "...And God said..."

Did you ever put yourself into this picture? How would you respond when you thought you were going to die in the storm and then Jesus spoke the elements into peace and quiet? They were filled with fear and amazement.

This is all that Luke tells us about the experience, but I suspect that there was much more to it than that. It seems certain that this was the topic of the disciples discussion for some time to come.

8:26-39 - The Geresene Demoniac Healed

Luke found it necessary to explain to his readers just where the Gerasenes lived. This further indicates that the recipients were from some area other than Israel. Gergesa is located about half way between Bethsaida and Hippius, on the east side of the Sea of Galilee.

We must be reminded that this is on the eastern, Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee. The city of Hippius was built by the Romans and dedicated to spread Roman culture and ways.

Luke gives a fairly full account of the events of the encounter between Jesus and the demoniac.

When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs...Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. Luke 8:27, 29

There are several facts about the demoniac which we need to remember:

1. This man was demon-possessed.
2. This condition was not new - He had been naked for a long time.

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3. He was totally isolated from human conditions - he did not live in a house or tent.
4. He lived in the tombs. Jews lived in tombs during a time of war, but on no other occasion if at all possible.
5. This man was under demonic control
6. He had physical power beyond normal human limits.
7. This man was not in control of his own life - the demon controlled him; sent him into solitary places.
8. The demon deprived the man of the vestiges of human living: clothes, home, companionship.

There is a sharp contrast between the way a demon treated people and the way Jesus treated them. Jesus healed people and made their humanity more meaningful. The demon divested people of their humanity.

Jesus was dealing with a situation that would make His disciples most uncomfortable. This man was not only a Gentile, he also lived in the tombs. This meant that he was perpetually unclean. The contact of the disciples with this Gentile made them unclean as well.

Why do you think Luke reports that the man had been naked a long time? We need clothes because we feel a need to protect ourselves; to hide our shame from the sight of others. The control of this man by the demon isolated him from other human beings permanently. Human beings were intended to experience community and sharing. The demon reversed that design to the detriment of the man.

The man was very strong. The thing that the text did not indicate was that the use of this power was quite detrimental to the man. Chains would not hold him, but think of the damage to his body as he rid himself of the chains.

This man lived in the tombs. The best that demon possession could do for him was to focus his world around death. Jesus came to give life. The demon surrounded this isolated man with the traces of death.

The demoniac did not control his own life. God created human beings to be in control of all creation. Under the power of the demon, this man was under absolute control and he controlled nothing at all.

Whichever way you look at the experience of this man, his life was the opposite of what it was intended to be when God created him. This experience tells us a lot about what Jesus came to do and what a demon is seeking to do.

When Jesus confronted the man, there was a shocking experience:

When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Luke 8:28, 29a

The first thing to notice about this conversation was that the man cried and fell at Jesus' feet. The fact that he cried indicates that there was a high level of anxiety, fear or pain. The content would indicate that there was anxiety and fear present. Jesus was commanding the demon to come out of the man. The man fell at the feet of Jesus. This

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was an act of subservience. It is an admission that Jesus is superior in power and position to the man and the demon who controlled him. The man shouted at the top of his voice. The contrast surfaces again. Jesus was quiet and gentle; the demon controlled man was screaming at the top of his voice.

Notice that the man knew that Jesus was the Son of the Most High. It is the Hebrew name for God, "El Elyon" which stresses the overwhelming majesty and power of God. This means that the man, under the control of the demon, knew who God was. It also means that he knew that Jesus was the Son of God. Throughout the Gospel records, this was one of the major contentions between Jesus and the Pharisees - Was Jesus the Son of God or not? Luke gives no information about how this man would know that, but he asserts that the man did know.

The man pleaded,

I beg you, don't torture me...Luke 8:28b

The result of this is an admission of the fact that Jesus was superior to and more powerful than this demon-possessed man. Anyone who has seriously studied the New Testament would be very clear that Jesus would not torture anyone. It would be out of character for Him.

Jesus dealt very directly with the demon-possessed man.

Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" Luke 8:30a

There is evidence in the New Testament that Jesus was all knowing. This being the case, why would Jesus ask the demon for his name? There are several possibilities, but one among them is the fact that by causing the demon to answer His question and identify himself, the demon was placed in a subservient position.

The demon apparently answered immediately.

"Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. Luke 8:30b

It was a way of identifying the fact that this man's body had become the abode of a vast number of demons. Again, notice the contrast. There were legions of demons present in this man's body, but Jesus was all alone. In spite of this, Jesus was more powerful than the demons and controlled them.

In the balance of this verse there are some interesting pieces of information.

*And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the abyss.
Luke 8:31b*

This is the second time in the paragraph that the man and the legions of demons "begged" Jesus. It is an acknowledgment that Jesus was indeed far more powerful than the demon who controlled this man.

The demon begged not to be ordered into the abyss. The Greek word for "abyss" is "abussos" "abussos" which means bottomless pit. It describes a cistern that is so big that it is considered to have no bottom. We talk this way when we talk about a "bottomless cup of coffee."

Luke reports a curious thing. In Palestine there is a large herd of pigs. He reports it this way,

A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside." Luke 8:32a

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Did it ever puzzle you that they were herding pigs in a land where a pig was one of the most repulsive things a person could imagine? Certainly there would be no market for these animals in Israel. You will remember that this experience took place on the eastern, Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee. The Gentiles did not have the repulsion from pigs that Jews and Samaritans had. Again, the cities on the Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee were centers of Roman culture and a strong part of that culture was the worship of idols. These pagan religions often used pigs as their sacrificial animals. This is what made it doubly tragic that the Roman ruler, Antiochus IV (called "Epiphanes") sacrificed pigs on the altar of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. In all probability the pigs in this herd were temple sacrifices for the pagan temples just like the sheep around Bethlehem were sacrifices for the Temple in Jerusalem.

The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the herd of pigs. Luke gives us much more than details of the event in this instance.

The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them (pigs) and he gave them permission." Luke 8:32b

Aside from the factual information in this sentence, Luke gives us some information about the demons themselves. Notice that they were totally under the control of Jesus. They had to ask permission to go into the pigs. They could not leave where they were and enter into the pigs without the specific release from Jesus. Luke is telling us something very important about the absolute power of Jesus and the powerlessness of the demons.

In verse 33, Luke gives us some more information about demons.

When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. Luke 8:33

Luke is telling us that demons need a body in which to reside. Luke is also telling us that the entry of the demons into the pigs was not beneficial for the pigs. The presence of demons, whether in animals or people, is always a destructive situation.

They had people who tended the pigs just as shepherds tended the sheep in Israel. This had to be a frightening experience for them.

When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside. Luke 8:34

This report was essential. Those tending the pigs were held responsible for the animals under their care. They would usually have all of the pigs from the whole community under their care. When something catastrophic happened, it had to be reported at once or they would be responsible to pay for the loss to their employers.

There was a shocking turn of events. Luke described it in these terms:

And the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Luke 8:35

These people had known the demon-possessed man for many years. They knew all about what he had done and how he lived. They were afraid of him. Put yourself in their situation. You have lost your entire flock. This would cause you both fear and intense anger. Now when you investigate, you find this possessed man sitting quietly and in his

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right mind. It is almost more than you can handle. To speak of their fear is an understatement.

In verse 36, Luke gives some extra information.

Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. Luke 8:36

If Jesus had told the crowd this information it would have been rejected as untrue. The fact that the herdsmen told the story meant that the people would believe them. In this instance, God used the word of unbelieving pig-herdsmen to proclaim the power of Jesus.

The response of the owners of the pigs is understandable.

Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left. Luke 8:37

It would be frightening to see the man they had known as crazy suddenly quiet and in full mental control. It was just as frightening to know that this man, Jesus, had been responsible for their financial devastation. If He could cause the loss of their pigs, what else was He capable of doing to devastate them further? Certainly they did what anyone else would have done in an attempt to protect themselves from even further losses.

In the face of their fear, Jesus did not argue the point. He capitulated to their wishes and left without resistance. Jesus was always a gentleman. He never forced His presence on anyone.

Verses 38 and 39 come almost as an afterthought. Being caught-up in the fear of the area people, we tend to forget the man who was delivered. Luke gives an insight into his situation.

The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him. Luke 8:38, 39

It is easy to understand the man's request. There was extreme gratitude. There was also a great desire just to be with Jesus. It is a bit shocking to us that Jesus turned him away. We need to remember that Jesus was not rejecting the man, but sending him on a different mission. It is natural for a person to want to be where the exciting things are happening. Following Jesus is more than excitement. This man was in a perfect situation to demonstrate just how powerful and loving Jesus was. We will refer to this situation a bit later in our study.

8:40-42 - Jairus Pleads with Jesus - Heal Daughter

Verse 40 indicates that this experience takes place back on the western, Jewish side of the Sea of Galilee. Notice how Luke expresses it.

Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. Just then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. Luke 8:40-42

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Verse 40 gives an impression of the intense popularity Jesus enjoyed at this time in Galilee. They knew He was coming and they wanted to see Him. They had seen His miracles. They had heard His teachings and they were eager to hear more.

Jairus was a "ruler of the synagogue." This meant that he was an unpaid faithful member who gave general oversight to the life of the synagogue. His duties would include securing people to do the readings and lead in prayers at their regular worship services. He would invite a visiting Rabbi to address the congregation. He was also responsible for the decorum of the services. In this respect, it was a "ruler of the synagogue", in Luke 13:14, who chided Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. This was a position of honor in the Jewish community as it is today.

Luke mentions the fact that this girl was about 12 years of age. This tells us that she was considered a grown woman, of marriageable age. It was not uncommon for girls to be married at age 12.

Luke tells us that the girl was Jairus' only daughter. Daughters were not considered important in that culture. Luke would only mention that this girl was Jairus' only daughter if there were no other children in the family. This meant that if she died, he would be childless. This was a matter of shame for any Jewish family; a matter of unbearable shame for a leader of the synagogue.

The nature of the girl's illness was not disclosed. Whatever the disease, it was about to cause her death. In this dire circumstance, the father came to Jesus for help.

There was probably a verbal exchange between Jesus and Jairus, but it is not recorded for us. Luke assumes Jesus' concern and reports that Jesus went to minister to the girl:

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. Luke 8:42b

Jesus went with Jairus to do as the father had requested. As they went, they encountered a crowd so intense that they almost crushed Jesus. That was a lot of people in an area as sparsely populated as northern Galilee.

8:43-48 - Woman with the Issue of Blood

This has sometimes been called "the miracle on the way to a miracle." That is precisely what it is. As Jesus went to heal Jairus' daughter, He encountered this woman who needed to be healed.

And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. Luke 8:43, 44

This woman had had this condition for 12 years. She had had this condition as long as Jairus' daughter had lived. This is a very long time. The implications of this fact will be seen shortly.

Though this story is recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke, none of them identify the disease specifically. In each case it is dealt with as some form of hemorrhage or discharge. The implications of this situation are intense at best. The book of Leviticus deals with this situation:

When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she

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will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period. Leviticus 15:25

This condition had been going on continually for 12 years. That meant that she had been unclean for that period of time. Everyone who touched anything that she touched had been unclean for the same length of time. The entire family would have been barred from worship for 12 years. She had borne no children for 12 years and that would arouse suspicion about her relationship to God and cast aspersions on her husband's position in the community. Her husband could not worship during that time. The women of the community would have nothing to do with her. She had been a social and spiritual outcast for 12 years.

Add to this the fact that the Jews had some unusual customs. If a woman failed to bear a child for at least ten years, it was considered valid grounds for divorce. In the minds of some scholars, this was a valid reason to believe that she was not married, but divorced.

Luke, understandably, deals very gently with this situation. Mark 5:21-43 tells us that she had suffered many things of many doctors and spent all that she had, but got worse rather than better. They had two kinds of practitioners in that day. There were highly trained physicians, such as Luke, and there were also quacks who used superstition and old wives' tales to attempt cures. Doctors would release a patient's blood in an attempt to rid them of a disease. This practice of blood letting was practiced up into the 18th century in America. President Washington received this treatment for a medical problem that he had. The hemorrhaging this woman experienced would seriously dissipate her strength. Add to this the blood letting by the physicians and she would be even weaker. This practice had gone on for 12 years. It had to be almost more than she could bear.

As we said earlier, everything and everyone she touched would be unclean. During the time of a monthly period or continuing discharge, a woman usually remained at home. Just being in public would bring her abuse from other people. For this to happen in a crushing crowd would make it impossible for others to avoid contact with her and then vent their wrath on her. Certainly she came up behind Jesus in an attempt to avoid being further harangued by Jesus or others. Think of what this kind of abuse did to her sense of self-worth.

Mark tells us that she said to herself,

...because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed."

Mark 5:28

The question naturally comes to us, why would she think that touching His clothes would bring healing? Our best Greek texts do not say that she touched His clothes but that she touched the boarder or hem of His garment. The hem or fringe on a man's garment served two purposes:

1. It was to remind him about the Law of God.
2. It also served as an indicator of a person's station or position in the community. The longer the fringe, the more important the person. In this same vein, people thought that the power of a person was resident in this fringe.

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This woman had tried everything else that she could think of, but to no avail. In a last desperate effort she tried to find help by coming to Jesus.

This whole experience brought a misunderstanding between Jesus and the disciples. They got upset when He said,

"Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me." Luke 8:45, 46

Jesus referred to the touch because of His awareness that power had gone out from Him. Peter dealt with it as if Jesus had just experienced the jostling of the crowd. Peter must have felt that Jesus was not doing too well that day.

The woman did not answer when Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" Finally it apparently seemed she could no longer hide her situation.

Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed." Luke 8:47

Why would she tremble? She had 12 years experience of rejection. Despite the 12 tragic years, this was probably closer to a crowd than she had been in the entire time she suffered with this ailment.

There were two results of this woman's courageous attempt to get Jesus to heal her:

1. She was instantly healed because of her faith.
2. She, by touching Jesus and everyone around Him, had made them all unclean. Jews did not take that lightly. From a human point of view, she had good reason to tremble.

The fact that she fell at His feet was an act of subservience. This was her way of acknowledging that she was humbled before Him. Notice that she admitted, in front of the entire hostile crowd, that she had touched Him and why she had done it. That took great courage, for the risks were high.

Some have been shocked by Jesus response to the woman's confession.

Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace." Luke 8:48

The shock has to do with the fact that Jesus called her "daughter." We have absolutely no reason to believe that Jesus was the father of any children at all. Why then would Jesus call her daughter? Was it just a way of addressing a woman? Could it have been just a colloquial expression? I doubt it.

There is a cultural understanding that is helpful here. It was not acceptable for anyone to touch the fringe of a man's robe except members of his own family. If anyone else saw her touch Jesus' robe, they would have exposed her to even further rejection and ostracism. Jesus dealt with that by calling her daughter.

Jesus identified the root of her healing. He said,

*... "Daughter, **your faith has healed you.**" Luke 8:48*

Jesus' words take nothing away from the greatness of His power. He was simply saying that healing found its root in her conviction that Jesus could and would heal her tormented body.

Jesus knew more about this troubled woman than the identity of her disease. Notice how He concluded his instructions:

"... Go in peace." Luke 8:48b

These were probably new ideas in her mind. It had been more than a decade since she had known any degree of peace. Jesus had changed all this. He healed the disease and restored the peace that had been the casualty of her disease.

8:49-56 - Jesus Raised Jairus' Daughter from the Dead

As we indicated earlier, the story of the woman with the issue of blood was an interruption in the story of Jesus dealing with the dying daughter of Jairus. In verse 49, Luke returns to that story. He begins by saying,

While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more." Luke 8:49

This presents us with a problem. Mark and Luke deal with the daughter as being alive when Jairus came to Jesus, but dying before He came to the home. Matthew, however, has the daughter die before Jairus came in the first place. There is no ultimate solution to this apparent problem. As happens often in Luke's account, his focus is not on the timing of events, but on the events themselves and the meaning that lies behind them.

At this point there appears to be no reason for Jesus to continue to go to the home of Jairus. Notice, however, that this news did not change what Jesus was doing in any way. He knew that the girl would be healed and restored to her family.

Jesus' response to Jairus was simple but straightforward.

Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed." Luke 8:50

There is a profound message in Jesus' reply. Logically, it does not make sense to continue going to the home of Jairus if the child is already dead and nothing can be done for her. Jesus' continuing on his journey indicates that the fact that she had died was extraneous information in this situation. In the face of this information Jesus instructed Jairus to do two things:

1. (-) Do not be afraid
2. (+) Just believe

Frankly, sometimes when we think we are believing, there is still fear. Belief in the power of God to do the impossible overrides the apparent impossibility of current conditions. This is something that the church today must learn.

In verses 51, 52, Luke begins to describe Jesus' encounter with the people who were at the home of Jairus.

When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother.

JESUS TEACHES AND HEALS IN GALILEE

Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said, "She is not dead but asleep." Luke 8:51, 52

Jesus could have healed the girl whether these five people were with Him or if everyone in the house was present. Jesus limited the people who could come in to just the three disciples he had brought and the two parents. There may be other considerations, but this one is primary. The parents believed Jesus could heal their daughter. The disciples had seen Him heal others. The other people, however, did not know this. They were dealing with logic and reason. For them, when the girl died; she was dead. That was the end of the matter. Jesus never dealt with life with that kind of finality. Their presence would only have been a limitation to His work.

The people were wailing because that was the custom of the day and the land. If the family did not wail or hire others to do so, people would assume that the family was not really sorry that their loved one had died. The text does not say, but we assume that these were professional mourners. Lest we feel that they were too calloused, remember that not a few floral arrangements show up at funeral homes out of fear that people will think that the giver had no sense of loss.

Why was it important for Jesus to get them to stop wailing? He could have raised the girl with the wailing in process. In the mind of Jesus, the girl was not dead. To continue wailing was an admission that she was dead. Jesus immediately followed up with a statement to the fact that the girl was asleep and not dead. This does not mean, as some assert, that she was simply comatose. She was dead, but Jesus did not wish to bring premature declarations about His messiahship. This was one of the tests of the Messiah.

The response of the mourners was predictable.

They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" Luke 8:53, 54

This is as diametrically opposed as two positions can be. They were laughing at how ridiculous His words and actions were. Jesus was proceeding with restoring the life of this young woman.

Again, Jesus touched a dead body. Though this was repulsive to religious leaders, Jesus did not shirk from it in the slightest. Notice that Jesus brought her back to life by a command, not by any medical activity. In their eyes, to command something to happen was a greater expression of power than a physical action to make something take place.

The results were plain in the responses of those concerned. Notice what happened:

Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened. Luke 8:55, 56

There is no noticeable response of Jesus at all. He acted as though this was exactly what He expected to take place. He was busy giving instructions so that the girl's needs might be met.

The parents were a different matter. These parents, who had come to Jesus believing that He could heal their daughter, were astonished when He actually caused it to happen. We should not be too harsh with them. How many times have we been surprised when we prayed for something and it actually came to pass?

Conclusion

Luke chapter eight is a roller-coaster of emotions and experiences. Jesus taught the parable of the Sower and about the light placed on a stand. He also experienced the pain of family tensions. Along with these awkward experiences, there was also excitement and rejoicing. Jesus calmed the frightening storm, He healed the demoniac, restored the woman who had been sick for 12 years and the girl who was 12 years old.

Because Jesus experienced the pain of family tension, does it make us feel that He understands? Because He healed these three people, is there a growing confidence within us to help us understand that what He did then, He will do again in the pain of our tensions and the needs of our lives?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 11

LUKE 9:1-62

THE TRANSFIGURATION

1. In our best Greek documents there are 12 paragraphs in Luke chapter nine. On the chart below, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

9: 1- 6	
9: 7- 9	
9:10-17	
9:18-20	
9:21-27	
9:28-36	
9:37-43a	
9:43b-45	
9:46-48	
9:49-50	
9:51-56	
9:57-62	

2. Read 9:1-6 again.
- What did Jesus send them to do?
 - What preparations did He make for them to accomplish these tasks?
 - What do you learn from this?
 - In 9:3 Jesus gave the disciples some very specific instructions for their mission:
 - What difference would these make?
 - What do these instructions tell you about Jesus' intention for this mission?
3. In 9:7-9, there is a brief parenthesis.
- Reread these verses several times.
 - What impressions/feelings do you get about what it was like to live in that situation?
 - Why would Herod feel the way he did?
 - What do these verses tell you about Jesus?
4. In 9:10-17, Luke tells of the feeding of the 5,000.
- Why did Jesus take his disciples to this seaside village area?
 - There **seems** to be a contradiction in 9:10.
 - What is it?
 - How can we explain it?
 - In 9:12 the disciples came to Jesus with a request.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

1. What was the request?
2. Why was it important to them?
- d. In 9:13, 14, Jesus made an unusual request of the disciples.
 1. What was it?
 2. Put yourself in the place of the disciples. Explore all your feelings when Jesus said that to you.
 3. Now put yourself in the place of the crowd. How would you feel if you heard Jesus say this to the disciples?
- e. Again, place yourself in the position of the disciples. How would you feel as you started handing out that little bit of food?
- f. In 9:17, the disciples each picked up a basketful of leftover food. What would go through your mind as you finished filling up your basket?
5. In 9:18-20, Jesus asked two questions of the disciples.
 - a. What were the questions?
 - b. Jesus is God and knows all things. Why, then, did He ask the questions?
 - c. Compare the answer to the first question (9:18) with the rumors Herod heard (9:7-9).
 1. How do the two compare?
 2. What does that tell you?
 - d. Which disciple answered? In what way is this significant?
 - e. What did the disciple mean by this answer?
6. Again, in 9:21-27, Jesus warns His disciples not to disclose His identity.
 - a. Why was that necessary?
 - b. Look carefully at 9:22. List all the pieces of information Jesus gave about Himself?
 - c. Compare this list with what actually happened to Jesus. What did you learn?
 - d. Why would Jesus follow 9:22 with the invitation of 9:23? What does this say to us in our situation?
 - e. Think about the **apparent** contradiction in 9:24.
 1. Put this sentence in your own words.
 2. If Jesus said these words to you, what impact would it have on your life?
 - f. 9:25 is a view of 9:23 from a logical perspective. What is Jesus talking about?
 - g. 9:26 approaches 9:23 from still another perspective.
 1. Compare the approach of 9:25 and 9:26.
 2. With what is each one dealing?
 3. In what ways do they add to each other?
 - h. In 9:27, it sounds as though the kingdom of God came in the lifetime of at least some of the disciples.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 11

1. Is it true?
 2. What did Jesus mean by "kingdom of God"?
 3. What effect does this have upon us?
7. In 9:28-36, Luke describes the Transfiguration of Jesus.
- a. What do you learn from the fact that this happened while Jesus was praying?
 - b. In 9:29-31, Luke mentions that Moses and Elijah appeared to and talked with Jesus. Can you suggest any reasons why it would be these two great men from Israel's history?
 - c. Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus about his coming death. Why?
 - d. Read 9:32, 33 carefully. Put yourself in the place of these sleepy disciples. How would you feel?
 - e. In 9:35, God speaks to the disciples out of the cloud. This is the second time that the Father spoke about Jesus in this manner.
 1. Compare Luke 9:35 with Luke 3:22.
 2. To whom is each addressed?
 3. What is the difference between the two?
8. In 9:37-43a, Luke tells of Jesus' healing the boy who had an unclean spirit. In 9:38 - 40, the boy's father pleads with Jesus to heal the boy.
- a. What information does the father give?
 - b. If you were one of the nine disciples who had been unable to deliver the boy from the unclean spirit, how would you feel?
 - c. Put yourself in the place of Peter, James and John. You have just come from the mountain top experience of the Transfiguration and immediately encounter this. How would you feel?
 - d. How do you account for the fact that in 9:1-6 the disciples were given the power to heal the sick, but they were unable to deliver this boy?
 - e. Reread 9:37-43a again carefully.
 1. What does it tell you about God?
 2. What does it tell you about demons?
 - f. In 9:43, Luke describes the response of the crowd.
 1. What did he say about them?
 2. How can you account for this?
9. In 9:43b-45, Jesus told the disciples, again, about His coming death.
- a. In 9:45 Luke said that the disciples did not understand what Jesus said because it was hidden from them.
 - b. Why would Jesus tell them at all if it was intentionally kept from their understanding?
 - c. Luke said the disciples were afraid to ask Jesus when they did not understand. Why would they be afraid?

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10. In 9:46-48, the disciples were involved in an unfortunate dispute over which of them was the greatest.
 - a. What value, if any, would they realize from being "the greatest"?
 - b. Jesus chose a child to illustrate his biting rebuke of the disciples. How does the child's presence illustrate what Jesus was talking about?
 - c. Reflect upon Jesus' definition of greatness. Illustrate it from your life. Illustrate it from your congregation.
11. In 9:49, 50, John informs Jesus of his attempts to protect Jesus' cause from intruders.
 - a. Read the verses again. What does John say about the man and what he was doing?
 - b. What reason did John give for his interference?
 - c. Reflect on Jesus' answer to John:
 1. What answer did He give?
 2. Describe how this answer applies in your community?
12. In 9:51-56, Jesus deals with Samaritan rejection.
 - a. Read 9:51-52a again. What does that sound like to you?
 - b. What is the significance of Luke's statement, "He sent messengers on ahead"?
 - c. Luke indicated that the Samaritans "did not welcome them." What difference would that make?
 - e. Put yourself in the place of the disciples as you read 9:54. How would you feel?
 - f. Now, read 9:55, 56, Jesus' response to the disciples. Give your explanation for the response Jesus gave.
 - g. Was Jesus agreeing with the Samaritan's actions?
13. In 9:57-62, Jesus again describes the conditions for discipleship.
 - a. Why must He repeat it?
 - b. Luke lists three illustrations of this message. Why three?
 - c. In 9:57, 58, it sounds as if Jesus were discouraging the would-be disciple. Can you give any explanation for this?
 - d. In 9:59, 60, Jesus invited a man to be His disciple and then rejected him.
 1. How can we account for this?
 2. In 9:60, it seems out of character for Jesus to reject a would-be disciple because the man wanted to bury his father. How do you understand these verses?
 - e. In 9:61, 62, Jesus appears to spurn a would-be disciple because the man wanted to say good-bye to his parents.
 1. This seems out of character and harsh for Jesus. How can we account for this response?
 2. Can you think of an Old Testament passage which had similar overtones?
 - f. There is an overarching theme that permeates this whole paragraph.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 11

1. What is it?
2. How can you apply it to your family? To your congregation?

LESSON 11 – LUKE 9:1-62

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In our best Greek documents, there are twelve paragraphs in Luke chapter nine. They are as follows:

9: 1- 6	Jesus Sent Disciples On Preaching Mission
9: 7- 9	Herod Perplexed About John the Baptist
9:10-17	The Feeding of the 5,000
9:18-20	Peter Confesses - Jesus is the Christ
9:21-27	Jesus Predicts His Own Death
9:28-36	The Transfiguration
9:37-43a	Jesus Heals Boy with Unclean Spirit
9:43b-45	Jesus Foretells His Death Again
9:46-48	Who is the Greatest?
9:49-50	Those Not Against Us are for Us
9:51-56	Jesus Deals with Samaritan Rejection
9:57-62	The Demands of Discipleship

As you study the above chart, notice that unlike some other passages there are a variety of activities under consideration - healing, teaching, preaching, conflict and the presence of miracles. The timing of the chapter is vague. It appears that this is because Luke is not so much trying to give us an exact historical record as he is trying to give us a carefully drawn picture of Jesus.

9:1-6 - Jesus Sent Disciples on Preaching Mission

Luke does not clearly identify the area to which Jesus sent the twelve. We assume that it was in Galilee for two reasons:

1. This whole chapter takes place in Galilee.
2. Galilee seems to have a greater concentration of small villages than Samaria or Judea.

When Jesus called the twelve together, He began by giving them the things they needed in order to carry out His commission.

1. He gave them power and authority "to drive out demons."
2. He gave them power and authority "to cure diseases."

This is not surprising. God always equips His people to do the task to which He sends them. They should have been able to discern, from this equipping, that they would need these gifts in the task to which Jesus sent them.

Jesus gave them specific directions concerning their task.

*And he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick."
Luke 9:2*

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"The kingdom of God" is a specific, meaningful identification. It is a way of identifying those who choose to place themselves under the control of God and live in fellowship with Him and His people. Jesus sent the twelve to invite all the people to subject themselves to the control and Law of God.

Notice the two directions of His instructions:

1. They were to preach the kingdom of God - concern for the spiritual condition of the people.
2. They were to heal the sick - concern for the physical condition of the people.

Repeatedly in the Gospel records you will find this dual concern for the whole person.

As with all our relationships with God, He not only equips us for the task we are to perform on His behalf, but gives specific instructions about how these are to be done. This is the case with this commissioning of the twelve:

Take nothing for the journey - no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. Luke 9:3

The Synoptic Gospels - Matthew, Mark and Luke - differ slightly with these instructions (see Matthew 10:9-11; Mark 6:6-13). In each instance, however, the message is that they must travel lightly. "The staff" was a walking stick. It gave the impression that the person was in the midst of a long journey rather than coming to the people to whom he was speaking. The "bag" was disallowed because traveling teachers and Rabbis, in that time, often used it to request gifts from those who listened. Jesus did not want this to be seen as a way to gather support.

They were not to take bread because Jesus wanted them to depend upon God for their needs. It would encourage them to visit all of the little villages because they would not have enough food for a day without going to another small community.

They were to take no money. It appears that Jesus was depending upon the law of hospitality for the daily needs of the disciples. Hotels were scarce and in that part of the country mostly nonexistent. Travelers were the responsibility of the people of the community. This was not to be a plush journey, but one in which needs were met in common ways.

They were to refrain from taking an extra tunic. Most of them probably did not have an extra one, though some of them might. The extra tunic could give people the impression of opulence. This would build barriers between them and some of the poor.

Jesus also gave them some instructions concerning their conduct.

Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. Luke 9:4

This instruction had two concerns. The disciples were not to be moving from house to house in search of greater comfort and luxury. On the other hand, they were not to move from a poorer home to a wealthier one to cater to the reputation and desires of the rich.

Jesus also prepared them for rejection.

If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them. Luke 9:5

The Jews would understand this instruction very well. When a Jew returned from any Gentile area, he was to stop, before entering a Jewish settlement, remove his sandals and

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shake the dust from them. It was an acknowledgment of the defilement of the Gentiles and an affirmation of the Jewish community. Jesus was not practicing prejudice. He was dealing carefully with the kind of people who reject the grace of God.

Verse six suggests that the disciples did just as Jesus instructed. They preached the Gospel and healed the sick in every little village they encountered.

9:7-9 - Herod Perplexed About John the Baptist

This paragraph is a small parenthesis between Jesus sending out the disciples and the report they gave upon their return. Though it is brief, it gives a very important glimpse into the atmosphere in which these events took place.

People start asking questions when God's people begin to share the Gospel. This happened in the first century as well.

Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. Luke 9:7

This was not surprising. It would have been surprising if the disciples had gone throughout Galilee preaching and none of this got back to Herod. First, "Herod" was not a person's name, but a family name. There were several rulers in Israel's history named Herod. "Herod the Tetrarch" was really Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great.

Herod the Tetrarch had put John the Baptist to death at the urging of the daughter of Herodias, his mistress and wife of Herod's brother Philip. John the Baptist had condemned Herod for this evil relationship. When Herod heard of the fame of Jesus, he was concerned. Herod had heard three rumors:

And he was perplexed, because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead. Others said that Elijah had appeared and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. Luke 9:7b, 8

If any one of these rumors had been true, it would have been cause for concern for Herod. This would especially have been true if John the Baptist had been raised from the dead. Herod felt great guilt over the beheading of John.

Put yourself in Herod's position for a moment. John denounced your evil relationship with your brother's wife and you put John to death. Now you hear rumors that he has been raised from the dead. Doubtless you would feel serious guilt and consternation if not outright fear. Hear it in the words of Herod:

... Herod said, "I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" and he tried to see him. Luke 9:9

A ruler had to be very careful about such things when dealing with the Jews. It did not take much to incite a riot among these volatile people. Herod wanted to see Jesus, but his motives were personal and political rather than spiritual.

9:10-17 - The Feeding of the 5,000

As the disciples returned from their preaching mission, Jesus was anxious to hear of their experiences. The crowds which were always with them made this almost impossible. Jesus wanted to give them an opportunity to share their experiences with Him.

When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town

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called Bethsaida, but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing. Luke 9:10

This passage gives us a glimpse into the mind and heart of Jesus. Jesus needed some private time with the disciples to allow them to report what had happened on their preaching mission. Because there were too many people present, Jesus took the disciples and went to a place on the shore of the Sea of Galilee near Bethsaida. The crowds noticed this, however, and they followed Him. Although Jesus had left the place where they were to get away from the crowds, He welcomed them and taught them about the kingdom of God. There were several in the crowd who needed to be healed and He met their needs. The needs of the people came before His need for comfort and fellowship.

This experience did not just take a minute or two. Notice what Luke wrote:

Late in the afternoon the twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here." Luke 9:12

The request of the disciples was well understood by all the people in that part of the world. They did not have hotels and fast food restaurants in Israel. When a person traveled, he could expect that people along the way would give him food and shelter for his journey. This practice was observed in this part of Israel and in the desert it is still observed today. We referred to this in our discussion of Luke 9:3. The problem in this instance was that there were not enough homes in the area to care for between 5,000 and 10,000 people. As the disciples said, "This is a remote area." They all knew that if Jesus did not send them away, He and the disciples would be responsible for their care for the night. The disciples were simply trying to anticipate an impossible situation and provide an escape route. Jesus was not as sensitive to this problem and did not sense the need for a dramatic escape from the custom of the desert - the law of hospitality.

Notice Jesus' reply.

He replied, "You give them something to eat." They answered, "we have only five loaves of bread and two fish - unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." (About 5,000 men were there.) Luke 9:13, 14

The disciples had a keen awareness of their limitations. We should have much sympathy for that problem because we tend to be more aware of what we do not have than of what we have. Jesus knew exactly what they had, in the way of food, and that was enough to enable Him to encourage them to feed the group.

Put yourself in the disciple's position for a moment. You just told Jesus that you have five small loaves and two small fish and He then tells you to feed 5,000 men plus women and children. How would you feel? Wouldn't you be a bit disturbed with Him? Wouldn't you wonder what was wrong with His thinking to expect you to feed more than 5,000 people with five small loaves and two small fish? There is little doubt that they had the same response.

Jesus was not deterred by their response.

But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." The disciples did so, and everybody sat down. Taking the five

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loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people.
Luke 9:14b-16

Again, if we had been a disciple it seems certain we would have been passing out the food mumbling to ourselves about how ridiculous it was to try to feed all these people with such a little bit of food. Why wouldn't Jesus listen to reason? The problem was that that was precisely where they missed out. They were dealing strictly with human reason, but Jesus was viewing the problem from the divine perspective.

Verse 17 is a powerful, but simple statement.

They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. Luke 9:17

The word "satisfied" "cortadzo," "χορτάζω" was an agricultural term which was used to describe the fattening of an animal. It describes how one feels when one eats until he can eat no more. Luke wants us to understand that there was an abundance of food and the people all ate well.

We must ask ourselves if there is any significance to the fact that there were 12 baskets of food leftover. There were 12 disciples carrying these baskets. In other words, each disciple filled a basket until it could hold no more. If you had been one of the mumbling disciples, when the food was being passed out, how would you feel now? What would you be thinking?

There were two basic kinds of baskets then:

1. "Sarganae" - "σαργάνη" - This was a large basket. It was used to let Paul down over the wall at Damascus.

2. "Kofinos" - "κοφίνος" - This is a smaller basket which was sometimes used to measure grain. This is the word that Luke used to describe the baskets employed to pick up the remaining food when all the people had been fed. Luke wants us to know that there was enough for everyone.

9:18-20 - Peter Confesses - Jesus is the Christ

The time designation here suggests that Luke is making no attempt to give us a blow by blow account. He is rather giving a selected series of events that convey a particular idea about the Christ. Notice the way Luke wrote it:

***Once** when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" Luke 9:18*

The time designation serves only to separate the paragraph on the feeding of the 5,000 from this paragraph where Peter identifies who Jesus is.

We should be reminded that Jesus already knew the answer to His question. Why then did He ask? He wanted to deal with His disciples concerning His identity.

The situation was important. Jesus and His disciples were by themselves. There were precious few times when this opportunity came to them. Nevertheless, Jesus was alone with His disciples in prayer. Jesus used this opportunity to teach the 12 concerning His true identity.

Jesus' first question was an easy one. They could answer Jesus' question by simply reporting what they had heard others say. Note what Luke reported:

*They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."
Luke 9:19*

There was no unanimity concerning Jesus' identity. Notice also that the three possibilities reported by the disciples were the same as those reported by Herod. This was obviously very common knowledge in Israel.

Notice how Jesus began His questioning. He started with a simple question that anyone could answer - Tell me what others think. Jesus then moved to the much more demanding question concerning their own faith and commitment - "Who do you say I am?"

Notice also that all twelve apparently responded when Jesus asked what others thought. When He asked the more demanding questions, it was Peter who answered. Observe how Peter answered:

Peter answered, "The Christ of God." Luke 9:20

Peter had heard Jesus teach concerning His identity, but it never seemed to sink in. Now, suddenly, Peter knows exactly who Jesus is. The name "Christ" is not Jesus middle name. Peter gave a very Jewish answer. The term "christos" "χρίστος" literally means "Anointed One." The Jews spoke of the "Anointed One" when they were describing their coming Messiah. In so many words Peter was saying that Jesus was the Anointed One for whom Israel had been waiting for centuries.

Notice, however, that Peter identified Jesus as "the Christ of God." When a person is identified in this manner, it sometimes means that there could be another Christ other than the one who is "of God." On other occasions, as in this instance, the emphasis is upon origin. In English it might convey Peter's idea to say "The Christ who comes from God." Peter is making two statements in one:

1. Jesus is the Christ for whom all Israel had waited for centuries.
2. This Christ came from God - He is divine.

The name "Christ," or "Christos", "Χρίστος" literally means "anointed one." It is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term "Meshiah." The Messiah was to be the king of Israel and kings were anointed; set apart for their task on behalf of God by anointing them with oil. Saul was anointed to be king as was David. Jesus explained that the woman of ill repute had anointed His feet for His burial just before the beginning of His crucifixion.

Peter made a daring statement when he called Jesus the "Anointed One" and announced that He was divine. In almost any other setting, Peter would have been stoned to death for such a statement.

9:21-27 - Jesus Predicts His Own Death

You will note that this paragraph begins with a warning concerning Peter's confession in verse 20. Luke states the warning in rigorous terms.

Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. Luke 9:21

The word "strictly" is "epitimao," "επιτιμάω." It means to rebuke or censure with punishment or penalty in mind. This is a very strong choice of words. On the other hand,

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the word "warned" is "parangello," "παράγγελλω." Notice that in both the English and the Greek the word "angel" is contained in the word. It describes the instructions that the angels, as divine emissaries, are to carry out. This is a command or charge issued by the highest possible authority. Jesus uses all the power of the language to impress upon the minds of the disciples that this is to be kept in confidence for the time being.

This warning is given repeatedly throughout the Gospel records. It seems like a contradiction, but it is not. Jesus came to proclaim the fact that he was "the Christ of God." He was not warning them to keep this quiet forever, but only for the present. If people had this message emphasized for them early in Jesus' ministry, they would get the wrong impression and destroy the possibility of His being a spiritual redeemer in favor of being a political leader.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus repeatedly gave His disciples a glimpse of the road He must travel. The disciples did not seem to hear the announcements Jesus gave, but they were present and can be traced through any of the Gospel records. Verse 22 is a case in point:

And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Luke 9:22

There are four pieces of information about the future of Jesus in this verse:

1. He will suffer many things
2. He will be rejected by the Elders, chief priests and Teachers of the Law.
3. He will be killed.
4. He will be raised to life on the third day.

Think about this list for a moment. This is precisely what happened to Jesus. This is not the picture of glory and majesty, but one of pain and suffering. It was a life of the most intense rejection. Jesus was being very honest with His disciples.

It is not accidental that Jesus followed this announcement with the following statement:

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke 9:23

It is clear that verses 21 and 22 are a preface for the announcement in verses 23. Jesus begins by announcing what His future holds. He then suggests that there is a prerequisite for those who would follow Him. They must be prepared to endure what He endured. Throughout the history of the church, people have tried to soften Jesus' pronouncement. It has only brought weakness to the church. One may not be excited about enduring suffering, but Jesus' demand is still true.

The requirements of a disciple are immediately followed by a rationale for them. Jesus said,

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. Luke 9:24

Again, this may sound like a contradiction in terms, but it is not. They appear to be illogical principles. Jesus was saying that people who put their own life ahead of all other

considerations will **ultimately** lose it all. On the other hand, those who put God first will **ultimately** save the life that it appears they were losing.

Jesus approached the rationale of His claims from another direction.

What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? Luke 9:25

Jesus is again looking at the same situation from another logical perspective. He was saying that if you look at discipleship from a totally logical point of view, it does not make sense to make economic gain your ultimate goal when in the end you will lose it all. Nevertheless, that is what a major part of the world is pursuing as fast as possible.

Jesus continues to deal with the same issue, but from still another perspective:

If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. Luke 9:26

A person who would be ashamed of Jesus and His words would be a person whose priority in life was something other than the will of God. Notice that Jesus describes an array of glory. It is not just His own glory. He will come in His glory, the glory of the Father and the glory of the angels. It is a way of describing exactly what Jesus had said. He suffered every possible form and depth of rejection. In the end, however, He will return in glory which greatly enhances his own unspeakable glory.

Verse 27 has caused consternation in the minds of some. This is in part because they believe that "the kingdom of God" is a synonym for the second coming of Jesus. Notice what Jesus said,

I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God. Luke 9:27

Remember, earlier we suggested that "the kingdom of God" represents those who choose to place themselves under the control of God and live in fellowship with Him and His people. The kingdom is not so much a place as it is a fellowship of people committed to God and each other. Most of the disciples experienced this committed fellowship in the life of the early church.

9:28-36 - The Transfiguration

Again, Luke begins with a general time designation.

*About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain **to pray**. Luke 9:28*

This has become characteristic of the writing of Luke. It is a reminder that Luke is not trying to give us a blow by blow historical account. He is trying to tell us something about whom Jesus is and what He was doing.

Jesus took only three of the 12 disciples with Him as He went up on the mountain. We tend to call Peter, James and John the "inner circle." This may not be an accurate way to refer to them. It appears that Jesus chose them not because they were more important than the other nine or that they should receive special privilege, but because there was a specific mission they were to accomplish. If the other nine had been present, there would have been much more interaction among the disciples than there was. The purpose was not to

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increase the interaction, but for the three to experience this great miracle and record it for us.

Jesus did not go up there to experience an emotional high, but to pray. It was in the midst of His experience of prayer that the miracle took place.

As Jesus prayed, the appearance of His face changed. You will remember that Luke was not present. This means that either the Holy Spirit gave him this information or one of the three who were present gave him a careful report. Notice Luke's account of the things that happened as Jesus prayed.

As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor talking with Jesus. Luke 9:29-31a

This was a shocking change which took place before their eyes. Notice that there is a form of brilliance associated with each description that Luke shares with us. Why would that be? The text does not say. There is a possible hint in the book of Exodus. The author wrote:

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. Exodus 34:29

This is not conclusive evidence, but it is an interesting parallel. I believe that this is the reason that Jesus' face changed and His clothes were as bright as a flash of lightning.

Luke reports that Moses and Elijah also appeared to Jesus. One's immediate reaction would be, why these two? Why not Abraham and Joseph? Moses and Elijah have some things in common.

1. Neither of them experienced death in the manner that we do. Elijah was taken up in a whirlwind. We do not know how Moses died. We only know that God buried him in the mountains on the east side of the Jordan near Pisgah.
2. Both Moses and Elijah had a unique relationship to the Law. Moses was the one through whom the law was given to the Jews in the Exodus. Elijah, on the other hand, was one who made a pronouncement on behalf of God concerning that law.
3. Both Moses and Elijah stood for righteousness against overwhelming odds. It is most fitting that these two giants from Israel's history come to Jesus as He prepares to face the same struggle for righteousness.

The two men were talking with Jesus. Luke describes for us what the three of them were talking about:

They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Luke 9:31b.

This conversation was a source of encouragement. It was an enabling, a preparation for the devastating experience that lay ahead of the Lord. Both Moses and Elijah had experienced their share of opposition and persecution because of their faith. They could speak first hand concerning the pain of obedience.

Luke was a master at drawing comparisons and contrasts. Having described the exuberance of the coming of Moses and Elijah, Luke now turns back to the three disciples.

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Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. Luke 9:32

It would be easy to think disparagingly about the disciples. It is too easy to say that in the midst of a great miracle of God the disciples were fighting sleep. The problem is that we all know a lot about that experience. When God was doing something exciting, we were doing something mundane or following our own poor choices of priority.

Luke was not interested in pointing the finger at the disciples. Notice how he described the incident:

...But when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters - one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) Luke 9:32b, 33

In verse 32b you see Luke struggle with the extremity of his language. How does one describe the glory of God? How does one do justice to the grandeur of such an experience? Naturally, Peter was the one who would speak, but what could he say? It is obvious from his statements that he also was at a loss for words. Peter said, "It is **good** for us to be here..." The word "good" "kalos," "κάλως" speaks of something special, something fine and unusual. James uses the word in James 2:3 to describe the giving of special seats to the prominent. Peter was saying it is exciting for them to be there for this important experience.

Peter suggested that they should make three "shelters" - One for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. Whatever Peter had in mind, it was not a place for them to reside. He was making provision for Jesus, Moses and Elijah, but none for James, John and himself. The word "shelter" "skaenae" "σκήνη" means a place of residence. We must remember that it was more often used to describe a place to meet God. Peter realized that whatever else was happening, they had been in the immediate presence of God and it was wonderful.

Luke is very direct when he commented, casually, "He did not know what he was saying." Peter was so astonished that he could not fully grasp the total meaning of the experience he had witnessed.

It had been very exciting, but the experience was not concluded yet. There were some more surprises in store for them.

While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. Luke 9:34

We do not know if the cloud came as quickly as it did miraculously. We only know that as they spoke, the disciples found themselves in the middle of a cloud. I am sure that I would have been as afraid as they were. This was not all for effect. Notice how Luke describes it:

A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen, listen to him." Luke 9:35

This is clearly the voice of God the Father dealing with the believers concerning the life of Jesus, His Son. It appears that God urged them to listen to Jesus because they had not been

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listening. This is one of many places where God identifies Jesus as the Son of God; the Messiah.

Observe the way Luke reports the conclusion of this experience.

When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. Luke 9:36a

It is as though there were two primary reasons for this experience:

1. To allow Moses and Elijah to talk with Jesus for encouragement.
2. To dramatically tell the three disciples to change their ways and to listen to Jesus.

Reflect on this chapter for a moment. In Verses 18 f.f., Jesus and the disciples were talking about Jesus' identity, in the minds of the people, as well as Peter's affirmation that Jesus was the Son of God. The Transfiguration follows and God the Father commands these sleepy disciples to listen to Jesus for He is God's Son. The closing sentence in the paragraph seems to contain a bit of humor. Note Luke's words:

The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at the time what they had seen. Luke 9:36b

There is little doubt that they did keep this experience to themselves. This statement includes a bit of sarcasm. Did they ever keep it to themselves?! How does one deal with this experience without dealing with either sarcasm on the one hand or the impossible on the other?

9:37-43a - Jesus Heals Boy Who had an Unclean Spirit

This paragraph also begins with a reference to the previous paragraph. This is a rare specific time designation in this Gospel record. Notice what Luke said,

The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. Luke 9:37

They came down from the mountain on the following day. This means that they spent the night there. It appears that this is the reason that Luke was specific at this point.

The scene shifts abruptly. They had been in the euphoria of the transfiguration and suddenly they are blunted confronted with the pain of life.

A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not." Luke 9:38-40

The man said that this was his only child. This child, a son, was to be the source of great joy for his father, but it turned out that his life was the source of untold agony. This would bring anyone back to reality in a hurry. This plea tells us a lot about the boy, about Jesus and about spirits.

1. The boy suddenly screams.
2. He is thrown into convulsions.
3. He foams at the mouth.

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4. The spirit is almost always with him.
5. The spirit is destroying him.
6. The disciples could not drive the spirit out.

This boy was in a horrendous situation. This spirit had control over his life. Nothing that they had could do relieved them of this dominance by the spirit. Note that this spirit did not use his control over the boy to do things that would improve his life. The spirit was destroying the boy. It is important to note that there is no record, in Scripture, of a demonic spirit doing anything positive and constructive in the life of one that they controlled. It was always destructive.

Jesus responded to the frightened father:

"O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "How long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here." Luke 9:41

This verse is often interpreted as if Jesus was speaking to the disciples and not to the father. Notice at the end of the verse it says, "Bring your son here." In the Greek text it says, "the son of you." It is not possible that this sentence was spoken to the disciples. It must be directed to the father.

Jesus was suggesting that if they had faith this would have been dealt with previously. He called it a "perverse" generation. The word "perverse," *"disastrepho,"* "διστρέφω" is a compound word which means "to turn through," "to twist," "to distort." In this instance it means "to turn aside" or "to corrupt."

Jesus sounds a little bitter or sarcastic in the next two phrases:

1. "How long shall I stay with you?" - Jesus knew that He would not be with them unendingly. He was saying, what will you do when I am no longer here?
2. "... and put up with you?" - A better word would be "endure." "Put up with..." suggests an angry gritting of the teeth to outlast an unsavory foe. "Endure," on the other hand, suggests the idea of holding true to one's position no matter what the opposition. Jesus did not want to see these people face life's problems in this way, but they were unable to follow His lead at this point.

While the boy was coming to Jesus, the demon made one last attempt to destroy him.

Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. Luke 9:42

The term "threw him to the ground" is "raegnumi" or "ρηγνύμι." It is a term from the boxing arena which means "to dash to the ground," "to shatter," "to rend or lacerate." It is more than a convulsion. It is a devastating blow. On the other hand, the term "convulsion" "susparasso" "συσπαράσσω" means "to convulse together." We expect Luke to give a careful, sensitive medical description. In this instance we have an excellent illustration of that. The multiplying of descriptive terms lends intensity to the meaning of the words. It is a last, gasping attempt to do violent damage to the boy whose life the demon commandeered.

Luke gives a vivid description of Jesus' reaction to this terrible abuse of the boy.

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But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. Luke 9:42

The word "rebuke" "epitimaō" or "ἐπιτιμῶ" is, with few exceptions, used in the Gospels to describe Jesus' rebuke of demons. It means to use one's honor to place a judgment upon the guilty. This is what Jesus did to the evil spirit that occupied the young boy's body.

Jesus healed the boy. This had to involve delivering the boy from the power of the demon.

Jesus gave the boy back to his father. It is a way of expressing a completion of his deliverance. Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead. In Luke 7:15, the physician says,

The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother." Luke 7:15

It appears that is exactly what Jesus had done in this instance.

Luke describes the reaction of the crowd in these terms:

And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. Luke 9:43a

Note that the crowd did not praise the power of Jesus. They were amazed at the greatness of God. We do not know how Jesus conveyed the fact that this was an act of God working through Him. That message got through to the people and they were giving praise to God.

9:43b-45 - Jesus Foretells His Death Again

The scene shifts again. Look carefully and you will see two scenarios going on simultaneously.

1. The crowd is busy praising the glory of God.
2. Jesus is teaching His disciples.

This is the way Luke describes the scene:

While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. Luke 9: 43b, 44

Jesus instructs the disciples to listen carefully. This always means that something very important is about to be said. Again, He identified Himself as the Son of Man. Jesus went further to say that the Son of Man would be betrayed into the hands of men. This was not an exciting, upbeat scenario. It was a message, however, that Jesus had shared with the disciples on many occasions, in a variety of ways.

The fact that Jesus had told them this before did not seem to help them accept it any more than they had on any other occasion.

But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it. Luke 9:45

This was a strange situation that had occurred often before. Jesus told them, and yet in a sense He had not told them at all. It was an ingenious teaching method employed by Jesus. The message was hidden from them, so they could not understand. When the events had

occurred, however, these disciples would remember that Jesus had been teaching this and they couldn't understand it.

9:46-48 - Who is the Greatest?

From the sublime to the ridiculous! They had been talking about the fact that the Son of Man was going to die, but simultaneously some of the disciples were haggling over which of the disciples would be the greatest.

This seems ridiculous to us, but it was important to them. The idea of the greatest" was tied to their understanding of political power. The "greatest," most powerful person in a nation sat at the right hand of the king. This person was the king's most trusted advisor and second in power only to himself. This was the situation with Joseph in Egypt. The next greatest person in a nation sat at the king's left hand. He was more powerful than anyone else in the nation except the king and his chief advisor. The disciples were displaying their understanding of the kingdom of God as a political entity.

Luke describes this tragic argument in these terms:

An argument started among the disciples about which of them would be the greatest. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me: For he who is least among you all - he is the greatest."
Luke 9:46-48

This was a shock to them. They had a different set of values. The disciples dealt with greatness based on competition. God, on the other hand, dealt with greatness based on a principle which from a human point of view was illogical. Jesus was saying that despite its appearance of being illogical, it was nonetheless true. The one who achieves the lowest position, that one will be greatest in the eyes of God. The one who is the servant of all others will be greater than them all. Jesus, as usual, used excellent visual aids. He took a little child and placed him in the midst of the disciples. A little child basically is genuine. He lacks the deception; the willingness to use people for personal ends that characterizes so much of our adult existence.

People chose to be with other people based on personal benefit. The basic question in relationships was, How can I use this person to assist my goals? Jesus said, The person who welcomes; who seeks out a little child who can be of absolutely no help to the person; he will be welcoming Jesus. Those who seek the company of Jesus, who was of no benefit to impress others for worldly goals, these welcomed the one who sent Jesus, namely the Father. Jesus then stated a basic principle of the kingdom:

For he who is least among you all - he is the greatest. Luke 9:48c

From a human, logical point of view, this is totally illogical. It is of utmost truth in the mind of God.

9:49, 50 - Those Not Against Us Are For Us

This is a difficult paragraph for most of us. We tend to put a sharper point on relationships than Jesus was in this instance. Take note of the exchange between Jesus and John.

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"Master," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him because he is not one of us." Luke 9:49

The basis of righteousness and privilege, for John, was whether a person was one of Jesus' disciples. All others were excluded. What the man was doing was good in the eyes of both Jesus and the disciples. Notice also that the man was doing the right thing in the right way; he was driving out demons in the name of Jesus. The problem was that the man was not one of the twelve.

Jesus' answer was a crucial one.

"Do not stop him," Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you." Luke 9:50.

Jesus was not particularly interested in whether the man had the right connections with the twelve or with the religious community. Jesus was concerned about what the man was doing and why he was doing it. This is an area in the life of the church that needs to be viewed in the light of the teachings of all Scripture.

9:51-56 - Jesus Deals With Samaritan Rejection

The opposition up to this point, with few exceptions, came from the religious leaders of the people. In this paragraph Jesus experiences rejection from a people whose cause He had championed.

Verse 51 forms the transition between Jesus' ministry in Galilee and the turn toward Jerusalem and the cross.

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem, and he sent messengers on ahead. Luke 9:51, 52a

There is a deliberateness about the actions of Jesus. There is no doubt that He knew what was happening and was working with that direction for His life.

The word "resolutely" does not appear in the text, but the idea is there. A more literal translation of the text might be, "He the face of him **set** to go unto Jerusalem." The word "set" is "steridzo" or "στηρίζω" and suggests making something strong and unmovable. Paul uses the term to speak of establishing or confirming the saints. It means to so instruct them that their understanding and practice of the faith cannot be swayed. Jesus set/established His face in the direction of Jerusalem and nothing could deter Him from that mission.

The sending of messengers ahead was a kingly action. The king sent messengers and proclaimers ahead to let everyone know that he was coming. Jesus is beginning to conduct Himself in a kingly manner. Messengers, probably disciples, were sent ahead to arrange for Jesus and the other disciples.

As was His custom, when Jesus traveled from Galilee to Jerusalem, He went through Samarium rather than around it, as most of the Jews would do. Luke reports the event:

They went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him. But the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. Luke 9:52, 53

This was an obvious form of prejudice. The fact that Jesus was headed in the direction of Jerusalem was not conclusive that He would go there. There were many places in Judea

Jesus and the disciples could have gone other than Jerusalem. As happens so often with prejudice, assumptions were made which might not be valid.

When Luke suggests that the Samaritans did not welcome them, he was being gracious. It means that the people would not offer them hospitality. They would not give them a place to stay and they would not sell Jesus and the disciples any food. It would not be uncommon for a Samaritan to follow them through the town and drop straw on their footprints. The Samaritan man would then backtrack and burn the straw to purify the ground of the Jewish footprints. Under normal circumstances, Samaritans would not touch money that a Jew had touched. If a Jew wished to purchase something, he must drop his money in a container of water to be cleansed. Then the Samaritan could fish it out and use it. This was ostracism of the most radical form.

It was not surprising that James and John were frustrated by this kind of treatment.

When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" Luke 9:54

This was the way the Jews and Samaritans both thought of each other. James and John reflected the feelings they had been taught from their earliest childhood. Nevertheless, these feelings were honest and widespread among both groups. The idea of calling down fire, had some very Jewish overtones.

Think of the difficulty with which Jesus would answer such a question. It is naive to think Jesus did not notice or that He did not realize there was rejection by the Samaritans. Jesus knew the pain, but He was also aware of the worth of people whose conduct was less than gracious. Jesus' response might not be well received by the Jews, but it was true to His character. Notice Jesus' response:

*But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village.
Luke 9:55, 56*

Jesus directed His rebuke to the disciples, not the Samaritans. Jesus was not saying that the Samaritans were right and the disciples wrong. He was suggesting that a second wrong attitude would not improve the first. Jesus' rebuke was a way of saying that the attitude which would call down fire, was not acceptable in a life dedicated to obedience to God. A right attitude, in this instance, was to go to another place. This they did.

9:57-62 - The Demands of Discipleship

As Jesus approached the end of His ministry, it was important to clarify, again, the real demands of what it means to be a disciple. As He so often did, Jesus used common experiences to help the disciples understand the message that He brought. One of those messages was the real cost of discipleship.

This paragraph is made up of the experiences of three people as they dealt with the real cost of discipleship.

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." Luke 9:57, 58

Again, the time designation is quite general. Luke is dealing with an issue, not with a historical event. Matthew 8:19-22 tells us that this man was a Teacher of the Law. The

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man made a strong promise to Jesus. It is as though Jesus was saying, "Think about this for a moment before you make the promise." All creation has a place to which it repairs for rest. The Son of Man, however, has no such place. It is one thing to promise to follow Jesus. It is quite another to make such a promise with the awareness that it will be costly. Some scholars believe that the Teacher of the Law did not follow Jesus after Jesus described the cost. There is no way to be certain.

In the second of three responses, which Luke includes in this paragraph, Jesus called the man to be a disciple.

He said to another man, "follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Luke 9:59

It was the responsibility of the firstborn to care for the burial of his father. It is entirely possible that the father had not yet died. Then there was the time of mourning which was lengthy. The man was saying to Jesus, "when these family responsibilities are cared for, I would be glad to be your disciple." Discipleship might be very important, but it was not to interfere with cultural requirements.

Look at Jesus' reply.

Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Luke 9:60

Some have treated this exchange as though Jesus was making an unfortunate demand upon the would-be disciple. I tend to disagree with this position. Jesus was saying there are many who are concerned with these things, but not everyone is willing to be a disciple. Again, Jesus was not treating the cultural responsibility of burial as unimportant. He was saying that this is a case of priorities and for His disciples, the proclamation of the Gospel was without question to be the first priority.

In the third encounter, Luke tells of another who would be a disciple of Jesus.

Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." Luke 9:61

This man was willing to be a disciple, but discipleship had to take second place to his relationship to his family. He was clearly saying that discipleship was important enough to do, but not important enough to put ahead of everything else in his life. Notice Jesus' reply:

Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." Luke 9:62

Again, this is a very strong statement. Certainly Jesus would not say that it was wrong to say goodbye to one's family. One of the attributes of discipleship with Jesus was that it must be the single most important priority in one's life. There is a similar encounter in the Old Testament. We cannot say that Jesus was thinking of this, but it would not be surprising. In I Kings, you will find these words:

So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. "Let me kiss my father and mother

goodby" he said, "and then I will come with you." "Go back," Elijah replied. "What have I done to you?" So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his attendant. I Kings 19:19-21

This was what Elijah was saying to Elisha. Every person who read the words of Jesus, which Luke recorded, would have understood quite well. One of the dangers of plowing was that of looking back. It inevitably lead to a crooked furrow. If a plowman kept his eye on the end of the row and his hand steady on the plow, the furrow would be straight. Jesus was saying that there should be absolutely nothing to distract us from our first priority of discipleship. Anything else would be unacceptable. We are not required to be a disciple, but if we choose to be one, the requirement is that nothing in all of life; nothing in the world can be a higher priority.

Conclusion

This chapter of Luke is a turning point in the life and ministry of Jesus. In the midst of the chapter, Jesus deliberately turns His face toward Jerusalem for the ultimate confrontation with the forces that would deter Him from His appointed task. Twice in this chapter Jesus deals deliberately with the intense requirements of being His disciple. It is as though He was saying, "Time is so short, I must make every effort to help people understand just how demanding it will be if they follow me to do the will of the Father."

This chapter teaches us many things about our discipleship.

1. We must be witnesses of Jesus.
2. We must expect Jesus to be omnipotent in all things.
3. We must be thoroughly convinced that Jesus is the Messiah.
4. There must be nothing in our lives as important as Jesus and His kingdom.
5. We must be as eager to show compassion to the needy as Jesus was.
6. There can be no place for personal desires or advancement. The kingdom must be our all-consuming desire.
7. We must be able to see the value of persons beyond the harshness of their weakness and sin.

Someone has said, "The costs are high, but the retirement benefits are out of this world!" Take some time and reflect upon your discipleship based on what Jesus is quoted as saying in this chapter.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 12

LUKE 10:1-42

THE SEVENTY ARE SENT TO WITNESS

1. There are six paragraphs in our best Greek manuscripts of Luke chapter 10. On the chart below, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

10:1-12	
10:13-16	
10:17-20	
10:21-24	
10:25-37	
10:38:42	

2. In 10:1-12, 70 disciples were sent out into the towns and villages of Galilee.
 - a. What were they sent to do?
 - b. Why did Jesus send them out two by two when they could have covered twice as many villages if sent out separately?
 - c. In 10:2 Jesus reminded the disciples that "the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." Reflect on Jesus' instructions which follow that statement.
 - d. Study 10:3. Why would Jesus do a thing like this?
 - e. Study the instructions Jesus gave the disciples in 10:4-12.
 1. Put yourself in a disciple's place. How would you feel when you heard these things?
 2. Why would Jesus give these instructions?
3. In 10:13-16 Jesus made some comparisons between four cities.
 - a. What difference would that make?
 - b. How would you describe these four cities?
 - c. In 10:16, Jesus suggests a royal picture.
 - a. What is the picture?
 - b. What does it mean?
4. In 10:17-20, Luke describes the report of the 70 disciples as they returned from their time of witnessing.
 - a. What was the mood of the disciples as they reported the results of their work?
 - b. What was the response of Jesus to their report?
 - c. Why did Jesus respond in this way?
5. In 10:21-24, there are two conversations. Reflect on these conversations.

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- a. In 10:21, 22, notice how Jesus addresses the Father. What does this tell you?
- b. Think carefully about this statement, "Because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children." Luke 10:21c. How can you describe the fairness of this statement?
- c. Read 10:23,24 carefully.
 1. What was Jesus saying?
 2. Why did he say it?
6. In 10:25-37, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan.
 - a. What difference does it make that this grew out of an attempt to test Jesus?
 - b. Every Jew would know the answer to the expert's question in 10:25b. Why would he ask the question?
 - c. Jesus, in 10:26, answered the question with another question. Why?
 - d. In 10:27, the expert in the Law quoted from the Old Testament. What does he mean by his answer?
 - e. In Luke 10:29, he tells us that the expert needed to "justify himself." Why?
 - f. Put yourself in the place of the man who came to test Jesus. How would you feel when the story was over?
 - g. Jesus used three unlikely players in the story he told - a priest, a Levite and a Samaritan.
 1. Why would He choose these?
 2. If you were a priest or Levite listening to this story, how would you feel?
 3. Why would Jesus use a Samaritan as the third traveler? What was he saying with that choice?
 4. Jesus gave careful details of the care the Samaritan gave the wounded Jew. Why would he do that?
 5. Reflect on this story again.
 - a. What was the point of Jesus' story?
 - b. How does it answer the question that was asked originally?
7. In 10:38-42, Jesus gets involved in a confrontation between Mary and Martha.
 - a. Why would Martha ask Jesus to intervene?
 - b. It seems that Jesus really deflated Martha's balloon. What was He really saying to her?
8. Review the whole chapter. In view of what it says about the Christian life, what do you want to happen in your life?

LESSON 12: – LUKE 10:1-42

THE SEVENTY ARE SENT TO WITNESS

There are six paragraphs in our best Greek manuscripts of Luke chapter 10. They are as follows:

10:1-12	Jesus Sent the Seventy to Preach
10:13-16	Jesus Prophecies Against Unrepentant Cities
10:17-20	The Seventy Return and Report
10:21-4	Jesus' Prayer
10:25-37	The Good Samaritan
10:38-42	Jesus Chides Martha for Her Busyness

One might wonder why we have chosen "The Seventy Are Sent to Preach." rather than "The Good Samaritan" as the title of this chapter. The latter is obviously better known. It appears, however, that "The Seventy Are Sent to Preach" is more in line with the direction and purpose of the writing. This is the reason for the choice.

10:1-12 Jesus Sent The Seventy to Preach

Some manuscripts say "seventy" others say "seventy-two". The best manuscripts say "seventy." This evidence is not conclusive by itself, but it is fair to say that the best evidence leans in favor of the "seventy." Whether there were 70 or 72, Jesus sent them out two by two to witness in the towns of Galilee. The fact that they were "sent ones" means that they were fulfilling the role of an apostle. The word "apostle" "apostolos" "ἀπόστολος" literally means "to send from." They were messengers sent from the Messiah to convey a message of Good News to the towns of Galilee.

The number 70 was very important in the history of Israel. There were 70 men who helped Moses give direction to the wandering nation. There were 70 members of the Sanhedrin. Certainly Jesus knew of these facts and used them as a way to give a symbol to the people of the villages to whom the 70 were sent.

Did you ever wonder why Jesus would send them out "two by two"? It was **not** that they would be comfortable having a companion with them as they witnessed. Judicial law established "truth" on the witness of two or three witnesses. Jesus sent them out in twos in order to enable the hearers to believe the miraculous things that they shared in their witness concerning Jesus.

Notice that these "sent ones" were not taking Jesus' place, but were sent ahead to the places where Jesus was going to preach in order to announce His message and His coming. This was one more kingly reference. Such heralds were always sent in advance of the coming of a king. The people in these villages were receiving advance notice that Jesus was coming. It gave them time to think about what they really believed concerning Jesus.

In verse two, Luke quotes Jesus concerning the import of their mission:

*He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."
Luke 10:2*

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Jesus is using parallels in this verse. The "field" is a way of referring to the "world." The "harvest" is that group of people who would accept the witness of the 70 and accept Jesus as their Messiah. The "Lord of the harvest" is God.

The word "ask" or "pray", in Greek is "deomai" "δέομαι" which means "to desire" or "to beseech." It is a strong longing or request. Notice, Jesus did not instruct them to work harder, or go on a campaign to enlist others. He instructed them to pray and expect God to bring the necessary people to do the task of witnessing.

Having given them their commission, Jesus then describes the conditions into which they were going.

Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Luke 10:3

This was a graphic description that everyone who heard would understand very well. Jesus compared His disciples to lambs; He compared the enemies of the Gospel with wolves:

LAMBS	WOLVES
Disciples	Enemies of the Gospel
defenseless	powerful
pure	evil
harmless	destructive

There is something frightening about this statement. Wolves were known to be frequent predators on the sheep. Sheep are defenseless animals. Jesus did not, however, use the word sheep, but lambs. These little creatures are even more defenseless than the adult sheep. Jesus intended that His ambassadors stand on His behalf at great risk. Notice that this was stated in advance. It was not an afterthought.

There is an interesting situation which exists between 10:3 and 10:4. Notice what Jesus said:

Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the way. Luke 10:3,4

Jesus told them they were going into a situation of great risk. He then instructed them not to take provisions with them which might have been to their advantage. That is not the way we think. If we told someone they were facing great risk, we would immediately instruct them to take every possible precaution. It is an effective way to inform the disciples that they were going to have to place their whole trust in Jesus Christ; they could count on no one else.

We tend to wonder why Jesus would give such an instruction to his ambassadors:

Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. Luke 10:4

This was not as bazaar as it sounded. There are four prohibitions in this sentence:

1. "Do not take a purse". If they took no purse, they could buy no food. It meant that they must depend upon God to provide for their needs.
2. "Do not take a bag." The bag was often used by traveling Rabbi's in order to collect offerings given by the people following the Rabbi's talk. The disciples

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were to have nothing to do with this. They were to trust in God for their provisions.

3. "Do not take sandals." These coverings for the feet were useful for three things:
 - a. Protect the feet on a long journey. They otherwise might go barefooted.
 - b. Indicate freedom. Sons wore sandals, slaves went barefooted.
 - c. To indicate station. The poorest of the poor might not have sandals. It could be to indicate that they were not impoverished.

Why Jesus told them not to take sandals, we can not be certain. It is possible that Jesus was simply instructing them to travel light. Whatever His purpose, it was a command, not a suggestion.

4. "Do not greet anyone on the road." This is not an instruction to be rude. It was, rather, a direction that nothing was to deter them from their important mission. Greetings along the road could be very time consuming and there could be many of these distractions. Jesus was saying, "do not let anything slow you down. This mission is too important."

In 10:5-7, Jesus gives the 70 instructions about how to conduct themselves in the homes where they will be entertained. He said:

"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house."
Luke 10:5-7

Peace, to the Jews, was more than the absence of war. It includes the absence of war, but also stands for the quality of wholeness; of a right relationship with God. Peace was very important to the people of Israel. This may be because peace was such a rare commodity in the land. The word peace (shalom) is much more than a greeting. It is a prayer requesting God to give peace to this person or household.

Some people are bothered by the idea of a blessing returning to the person who gave it. We must remember that these people dealt with blessings as though they had personality and character of their own. If a person refuses or does not deserve a person's blessing, then the blessing will return to the one who offered it. The blessing will not be wasted or abused. This is different from our view, but an understandable attitude toward the idea of peace.

Jesus' instructions concerning the house in which they would stay have two basic concerns:

1. He was concerned that they receive their daily needs. He had a strong desire that all their needs should be met.
2. He was concerned that they not go from house to house looking for better accommodations and food. The important thing was not their comfort, but their witness.

Jesus gave specific instructions for the 70 disciples when they are well received in a given town:

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"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'" Luke 10:8,9

In these two verses, Jesus describes the mission of the Christian in his community. He is to show great compassion to those in need - heal the sick - and he is to minister to their spiritual needs as carefully as to their physical needs. Both needs are very essential from Christ's perspective.

Jesus gave another set of specific instructions for the 70 when they were not well received.

"But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.' I tell you it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town." Luke 10:10-12

Rejection is a very real part of any attempt to witness. Jesus described a loving, but firm, way to deal with such rejection. Jesus' advice was graphic, but well understood. In that day, when a Jew came from any Gentile area or if a Samaritan came from a Jewish area, they would shake off the dust from their feet. It was a way of ridding themselves of things unclean and unworthy. Those rejecting the witness of the 70 would know that this was a way of saying, "you have a right to reject this invitation, but it renders you unclean in the sight of God." Only great harm can attend such a decision.

Jesus' mention of Sodom was well understood. People in that part of the world knew the story of Sodom and it stood as a symbol of what happens when people reject the invitation to follow the will of God.

10:13-16 - Jesus Prophesied Against Unrepentant Cities

Jesus began this paragraph with the use of a prophetic utterance that everyone would understand. "woe" and "blessed" were words that carried a prophetic connotation for people of that day.

Jesus singled out two cities by name and spoke very firmly about them in these verses:

"Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the Judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths." Luke 10:13-15

These are strong words. Notice the cities to whom He spoke. Korazin is mentioned only twice in the New Testament and in both instances it is this warning against them (Matthew 11:21; Luke 10:13). There is no mention of any miracle having been done in that city.

Bethsaida, on the other hand is a little different. The city is mentioned seven times in the New Testament. Two of these passages are warnings - Luke 10:13; Matthew 11:21. There are three miracles recorded as taking place in or around Bethsaida:

1. Mark 6:45 - Jesus walked on the water on the Sea of Galilee on the way to Bethsaida.

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2. Mark 8:22 - Jesus healed a blind man.
3. Luke 9:10 - Outside Bethsaida, Jesus fed the 5000.

It seems clear that there must have been a number of miracles that were done in these places, but were not recorded in the Scriptures.

In this same paragraph, Jesus also mentions Capernaum. This city was mentioned 16 times in the Bible. Jesus lived in the city for some time. The New Testament mentions six miracles that occurred in or around Capernaum:

1. Matthew 8:5 - Jesus healed the Centurion's servant
2. Matthew 17:14 - Tax money removed from the mouth of fish
3. Mark 1:21 - Jesus healed the man who had an evil spirit
4. Mark 2:1 - Jesus healed the paralytic
5. John 4:46 - Jesus healed the son of the royal officer
6. John 6:17 - Jesus walked on water on the Sea of Galilee

The way Jesus spoke suggests that there were many other miracles that He had performed which are not recorded in our scriptures.

In this paragraph, Jesus made an unusual comparison. Notice the way He spoke of Tyre and Sidon:

For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. . . Luke 10:13b

Both Tyre and Sidon had centuries before been Phoenician cities. They were well known for their evil ways and consummate idolatry. One can easily understand the shock of Jesus' words. He was making a stinging accusation concerning the condition of Capernaum. There are at least three specific mentions of miracles that took place in Tyre:

1. Matthew 15:21-28 - He healed the Canaanite woman's daughter
2. Mark 3:1 - Jesus healed many in the area.
3. Mark 7:31 - Jesus healed the man who was deaf and speechless.

We can safely assume that there had to be many more miracles that were performed in Capernaum, but were not recorded in Scripture.

Jesus concludes the paragraph with an interesting statement concerning their proclamation of the Gospel.

He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me. Luke 10:17

This is the picture of a king speaking with his ambassador. It is as though Jesus had said, "when you speak, they hear me." This is an awesome responsibility. People listen to one whom Jesus sends, but their reaction to that message is a response to God.

10:17-20 - The Seventy Return and Report

Some time before, Jesus had sent the 70 to witness throughout this part of Galilee. Now they are returning to report to Jesus about what had happened. Luke reported that the mood of the disciples was one of great joy. They were excited and pleased with the results of their mission. They said:

"Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." Luke 10:17b

The reason they gave for their exuberance was that they had had power even over the demons. This was a selfish outlook and technically not true. Jesus clarifies the issue in His reply"

*"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. **I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.**" Luke 10:18,19*

Jesus made a strong statement. He was saying that Satan was already a defeated foe. They were not the ones to defeat him. God did that. What power the disciples had, they received from Jesus. This leaves them nothing about which to boast. The victory is of God, not the disciples. Satan is a defeated foe, but his defeat is of God and not of the disciples.

Jesus then turns the conversation in a different direction, but accomplishes the same goal. He said:

"However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Luke 10:20

Jesus was very specific. He identified the thing in which they should not rejoice. There was no reason for them to rejoice in the fact that the spirits were subject to them. The spirits were subject to the power of God. Jesus identified the fact that He had seen Satan fall in defeat. It only looked as though the demons were under the control of the disciples.

Jesus then gave the other side of the coin. These disciples should rejoice that their names were written in heaven. The Jews would understand this statement very well. Each year our Jewish friends have a time of confession so that their names can be written "in the book.": It is a way of understanding that they are right with God, at that time.

10:21-24 - Jesus' Prayer

In this brief paragraph, there are two conversations: one with the Father; the other with the disciples.

10:21, 22 - The Conversation with the Father

Luke makes it clear that though Jesus had to mildly upbraid His disciples in the previous verse, He, through the Holy Spirit, was made full of joy. Notice the way verse 21 begins:

*At that time Jesus, full of joy **through the Holy Spirit**, said. . .
Luke 10:21a*

Jesus could rejoice because of the good experience the disciples had. Luke makes it clear, however, that the origin of this joy was through the Holy Spirit.

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There are two parts to this prayer: The first is an expression of intense praise; the second, while still praise, is an affirmation of the Father's plan for self-revelation. Notice the praise Jesus brings to the Father:

" . . . I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, . . . " Luke 10:21b

Jesus used two titles to refer to God:

1. Father - This title is used to describe the source of control of one's life rather than to identify the origin of it.
2. "lord of heaven and earth" - The word "Lord" comes from the Old Testament name for God - "Jehovah". Jesus used the word as an identification of the one who was master of His earthly life. The Father, who was master of Jesus' earthly life, was also the master - ruler of heaven and earth.

The second part of Jesus' praise can be misleading.

"...because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure." Luke 10:21c

It sounds cruel that God would blind the eyes of some and then condemn them because they did not know and practice the knowledge of His greatness. It does not seem that this is what Jesus was saying.

The word "hidden" "apokrupto" "ἀποκρύπτω," literally means "to cover from". Some might translate the sentence to mean that God said, "you are wise and learned, therefore I will make it impossible for you to understand this." It could also be understood to mean, "your learning gets in your way and inhibits you from understanding these spiritual things." I prefer the latter. It is not that God prohibits them from discovering truth, but for some, the arrogance of their learning can get in the way of their spiritual discovery.

On the other hand, the word "revealed" "apokalupto" "ἀποκαλύπτω," is the source of our word "apocalypse". It literally means "to remove the cover", to make truth accessible. People who, without great wisdom and training, have a childlike acceptance of the word of God, are sometimes able to grasp that which is hidden behind the glare of another's skill. We need to be clear about the nature of Jesus' joy - He is rejoicing that God does not exclude people simply because they are not among the intellectually elite; nor does He exclude them because of their intellectual gifts.

In the last part of this prayer Jesus said:

All things have been committed to me by my father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Luke 10:22

Jesus says, with joy, that the Father has placed everything under His control. The Father does not cease to be Father and Lord, He simply has placed all authority for everything under the control of Jesus. That is an awesome statement!

Jesus affirms that the Father possesses unique knowledge - "no one knows who the Son is except the Father. . ." The word "knows" "ginosko" "γινώσκω," means progressive discovery; to come to fully understand as opposed to knowing some things about a given

topic. The word also can refer to a relationship between the one knowing and the one known. That appears to be the case in this instance.

Jesus continues by simply reversing the statement: ". . .and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the son chooses to reveal him." The two statements share the word "knows" in the Greek text. Jesus is saying that the Son "knows" the Father and the Father "knows" the Son. There is a common awareness between the Father and the Son.

Notice however, that there is an added dimension in Jesus' awareness - "and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Jesus selected people to share this unique awareness of the person and nature of the Father. Again, the word "reveal" is "apokalupto" "ἀποκαλύπτω," which means "to uncover" for the mind to grasp. Jesus does not present this as a whimsical choice, but rather as information that the disciples would need to perform the commission He gave them. Whatever else may be involved in a understanding of this statement, Jesus is certainly saying that this is not something a person can discern by studying harder.

10:23,24 - The Conversation with the Disciples

Though there were people nearby, Jesus paused after prayer to speak privately with them.

"Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it." Luke 10:23b,24

The human mind has a phenomenal capacity to adapt to the beautiful and the tragic so that it becomes normal for us. In these verses, Jesus is reminding the disciples just how favored they were. There were many kings and prophets who were eager to discover the deep things of God, but it was never granted to them. I believe this suggests that the disciples needed this information in order to perform the will of the Lord; the kings and prophets did not. Nevertheless, the disciples were blessed men to hear and see what they saw and heard from Jesus.

10:25-37 - The Good Samaritan

This is one of the most famous stories in the Bible, but it is found only in Luke's Gospel. Notice that the time designation is extremely general:

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. Luke 10:25

There is no reason to think that this happened immediately following the time of Jesus' prayer. It probably did not. It probably never happened at all. As usual, Luke is not deeply committed to an historical account so much as he is to conveying specific images about who Jesus is.

The man who questioned Jesus was an "expert" in the law." The word, in our best Greek documents was "lawyer" "nomikos" "uomiko". These men were sometimes called "teachers of law", "Scribes", "Doctors of the law" or "lawyers." They knew more about the first five books of the Old Testament, the Torah, than anyone else in Israel.

Luke makes it clear that the "expert" had an ulterior motive for his question.

*On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to **test** Jesus. . . Luke 10:25a*

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The teacher probably had some serious interest in the law, but his motive on this occasion was less than spiritual. He like other members of the religious community, was trying to trap Jesus into saying something that could humiliate Him or be used against Him.

The man asked Jesus a very simple, but misleading question:

*"Teacher," he asked, "what must I **do** to inherit eternal life?" Luke 10:25b*

The man called Jesus "Teacher." There is record in Matthew 23:10 of Jesus referring to Himself as "teacher." In the New Testament, the title "teacher" is used to describe those who taught the interpretation of the Scripture.

Debate and discussion, among Jewish scholars, was almost always conducted with the use of questions. The man's question lends itself to some interesting observations:

1. It is an activist statement - he assumed that there was something that he could do to assure himself of eternal life.
2. Eternal life could be "inherited." This word, "klaeromero" "klhronomevw," literally means "to receive/possess by lot". It was later used to describe one's birthright or a heritage left by one's parent or earned for obedience to the law.

This teacher knew more about what the Jews believed concerning eternal life than anyone else in the community.

One of the fascinating things about Jesus' discussion and debate with the religious leaders was His utter simplicity in reply. Notice how Jesus replied:

*"What is written in the law?" He replied. "how do you read it?"
Luke 10:26*

The two questions may seem to be synonymous. They are not. In the first question, "What is written in the Law?" is asking what are the words in the text? What does the text say?

The second question has a completely different thrust: "How do you read it?" Jesus is asking the professional interpreter how he **interprets** what the Law says. The religious leaders were convinced that they could trick Jesus concerning the law, if for no other reason, because there were so many versions of what the law really said to us.

The "lawyer" set out to trap Jesus, but he found himself on the spot. Suddenly he was being asked an important question. He understood that question well and answered accordingly.

He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' and 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Luke 10:27

If you look closely you will notice that there are two quotations in verse 27. The first is from Deuteronomy 6:5. In all probability Jesus could have said, "look at the phylactery on your arm and tell me what the Law says." This quotation is part of the Scripture which was written in the phylactery that they wore on their arm. The second quotation is found in Leviticus 19:18. Some Christians feel that the statement about loving your neighbor is a Christian understanding. It is, but it did not originate with them. It comes from the Old Testament and was the object of great debate. There was intense disagreement, among Jewish scholars, about what the word "neighbor" meant.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Jesus affirmed that the "lawyer" had answered well. He said"

You have answered correctly," Jesus replied, "Do this and you will live."

Luke 10:28

In this question and answer exchange, Jesus had fully and accurately answered the man's initial question. Having affirmed the accuracy of the lawyer's response, Jesus gave him a command concerning the words of the Torah. That would have been a shock to everyone who heard Him. The "lawyers" were such experts of the law that no one would dare to command them to do anything in connection with the Law. Jesus did!

This command, however, was followed by a promise. The man asked what he could do to have eternal life. Jesus promised that if he loved God and his neighbor, he would indeed have eternal life.

This debate was not going the way the "lawyer" had hoped. He started out trying to put Jesus on the spot. It ended up with him being the one on the spot. Notice how Luke reported it:

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Luke 10:29

Most of us have understood the lawyer's need to "justify **himself**" as a need to justify the simple question which he had asked Jesus. That is not what Luke said. Luke said he wanted to justify **himself**. That is quite different. Suddenly the man realized that though he was a doctor of the law, Jesus had reminded him of the fact that he could not keep the law. He knew that he did not fully love God as Deuteronomy commanded. It was even clearer that he did not love his neighbor, for the word for love was "agapae " "ajgavph .". This is a form of love that requires no condition or response. It is a selfless form of love freely given and without reservations. He probably tried to love God without reservation, but he knew that he had neighbors he did not even like, much less love without any restriction.

The lawyer tried to ease out of that bind by reverting to a long standing debate among the "doctors of the law" - "who is my neighbor?" This debate among Jewish religious leaders, was intense, in some ways, as the debate among Christians over predestination and the freedom of the will. In most instances the word "neighbor", among Jews, meant another Jew. Gentiles were not considered neighbors.

Barclay gives us some impression about just how deep these feelings were among some segments of the Jewish community:

"Some of them said that it was illegal to help a gentile woman in her sorest hour, the time of childbirth, for that would only have been to bring another gentile into the world."¹

It was against the backdrop of the lawyer's question and the not too unusual Jewish attitude toward Gentiles that Jesus told the story we call "The good Samaritan." Notice the way Jesus begins the story:

¹ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956) p. 143

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In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. . ." Luke 10:30

There is no way to tell if Jesus was thinking of a Jewish or Gentile man. We can only guess that He was talking about a Jewish man. It is significant that Jesus speaks of going "down" from Jerusalem to Jericho. The city of Jerusalem is approximately 2300 feet above sea level. Jericho, on the other hand, is about 1300 feet below sea level. In the 17 mile distance between Jerusalem and Jericho the road drops at least 3600 feet. The new road between Jerusalem and Jericho is full of twists and turns. There are many rises and small hills where a person could easily be ambushed. The old road was far worse. For centuries this road was known as "the bloody highway." A caravan would usually be able to pass without too much trouble, but a person traveling alone was sure to have trouble.

In the story, this man was traveling alone. This would shock the listeners because few people would dare to travel this road alone. We must remember that this is a parable. A parable was intended to convey a spiritual truth, but it often did so by including some part of the story that would shock the listeners. This certainly was one of those things.

The man fell prey to robbers. Notice how ingeniously Jesus tells the story:

They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. Luke 10:30b

This takes us by surprise. When someone is held-up or mugged, in our culture, the thieves would take the person's possessions and money, but they would not take his clothes. Life was more severe in that day and time. Remember, the soldiers gambled over the clothes of Jesus? There was a ready market for used clothing and the thieves would take that as well. It was also a way to make sure that the person did not try to go for help.

The fact that the man was left "half-dead" means that he could be helped, the situation was not hopeless.

Jesus continued the story with another shocking turn of events.

A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. Luke 10:31

Priests were people who were dedicated to ministering to people. The conduct of this priest would shock the Jewish people. Some have tried to excuse the conduct of the priest on the basis of the fact that for him to touch a dead body would render him unclean. Remember, however, that this priest was going away from Jerusalem. He did not have to worry about becoming defiled. There are at least two obvious possibilities as to why he would not stop to help the man:

1. We assume he was also traveling alone. He may have feared for his own safety. He would have been more concerned about his own safety than he was about the dire needs of a dying man.
2. We also assume he was coming from the service at the temple. He would be bringing food and money from his time of service at the altar and feared that he might be ambushed also.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Imagine how a "expert in the law" would feel when he heard this story. The priest is portrayed in an unfortunate light, but I suspect that the common people who heard it would not be too disturbed by the suggestion.

Jesus continues with the story in another shocking episode:

So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. Luke 10:32

The Levites were assistants to the priests. They did tasks which enabled the priests to perform their duties without becoming defiled. They did the cleaning of the temple. They assisted in the sacrifices. The maintenance work of the temple was their responsibility. According to Numbers 19:11, anyone who touches a dead body and does not carry out the rituals of purification defiles the tabernacle. He too would have to be clean, but we must again remind ourselves that he was going away from Jerusalem, not toward it. It would not endanger his service in the temple. He would have the same obvious reasons for not stopping to assist the dying man. The Levite could not plead ignorance. He saw the man. He even crossed the road so as to distance himself from possible involvement.

Again, just imagine how the lawyer would feel hearing Jesus portray the religious leadership in these dismal terms. Rage might be an understatement.

Jesus now comes to the climax of His story. Again He shocks His audience by His reference to a Gentile.

But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. Luke 10:33

Notice that the verse begins with the word "but". This suggests that there is a strong contrast in progress. Oh, is that true! The difference between the Samaritan on the one hand and the Priest and Levite on the other, is startling.

There is one fact that must be considered. Jesus used the word "Samaritan", but that does not necessarily mean a person from Samaria, though it usually did. On one occasion, in the Gospels, Jesus was spoken of as a Samaritan. It came to be a term of derision given to heretics and people who were suspect. It is unlikely, though not impossible, that a Samaritan would travel through Jerusalem going east, because of the abuse he would receive as he went.

The Samaritan saw exactly the same things that the Priest and Levite saw. The difference that Jesus points out is that the Priest and Levite responded with distance. The Samaritan, however, responded with pity. The Greek word for pity "esplagchnistho" "eajplagnivsqw," means "to be compassionate, or tender-hearted".

Consider for a moment what Jesus has done in this story. He has portrayed a priest and Levite in an unfortunate light while at the same time portraying a Samaritan in a positive, laudable light. Surely that would not be wasted on those who heard Him.

Jesus is not finished. He continued the story by telling what the Samaritan did on behalf of the dying man.

"He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the

THE SEVENTY ARE SENT TO WITNESS

innkeeper. 'Look after him' he said, 'and when I return I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'" Luke 10:34,35

The wounded man had no clothing, so we can only assume that the Samaritan got bandages by taking something of his own, perhaps his undergarment, and tearing it into strips to make a bandage. The Samaritan cared deeply for the man.

The fact that the Samaritan was traveling on a donkey meant that he was at least a man of some means. Not everyone owned a donkey of their own. It appears that the Samaritan, having placed the injured man on his own donkey, was forced to walk until they came to an inn. The word for "inn" "pandocheion" "pandovceion," means "to receive all", a place where travelers of all kinds could come and find shelter and some safety for themselves and their beasts.

The Samaritan did not look to his own comfort and rest when he reached the inn. He spent his time taking care of the wounded man. This is sacrificial concern.

The Samaritan was willing to pay from his own pocket in order to bring the wounded man back to health again. The coins that the man gave to the inn-keeper were more than two days wages for a good worker. The Samaritan's commitment to help the injured Jew was intense.

We should note that the Samaritan's credit was good. He told the inn-keeper that he would return this way and pay for any other expense incurred in taking care of the wounded man.

Again consider the emotional reaction of those who heard Jesus tell the story. Just the mention of a Samaritan caused anger among Jews. To mention a Samaritan in such a caring, positive light while at the same time portraying a Priest and Levite in such an uncaring, negative light would cause instant rage.

Jesus had told the story, but He was not finished. You will remember that when Jesus started telling the story, he had been asked a trick question designed to embarrass him in front of religious leaders and the people. Having told this magnificent story, Jesus now inserts the "hook." He did it with a simple question:

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" Luke 10:36

Suddenly the lawyer is the one under pressure. No matter which way he answers he will be placed in an awkward light. Jesus is the one waiting for a clear-cut answer.

The lawyer weighed his words carefully. Notice how Luke portrays his answer:

The expert in the law replied, "the one who had mercy on him." Luke 10:37

Oh, how carefully Jesus wove the tale. Did you ever wonder why the lawyer replied "the one who had mercy on him" rather than saying, "the Samaritan"? Jesus knew the prejudice of His own people. They could not bring themselves to say the word "Samaritan". Add to that the fact that this Samaritan was one who was portrayed in such a good light while the Priest and Levite were both portrayed in an unfortunate way and they would be too enraged to be able to pronounce the word.

Only now was Jesus ready to do what He had been building up to since He was first asked the question by the lawyer:

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." Luke 10:37b

Again, Jesus did the unthinkable - He gave a command to the lawyer in a discussion concerning the law. Think about the command Jesus gave the man. First of all, He told the lawyer to follow the lead of a Samaritan when the lawyer was unable to bring himself to speak that name. He told him to have compassion on a national/cultural group whom this lawyer hardly considered human. Jesus' words were strong and biting. The issue of neighbor was never clearer, before nor since.

10:38-42 - Jesus Chides Martha for Her Busyness

Again, Luke begins another paragraph with a very general time designation. AS we indicated before, he is much less interested in the chronology of the events in Jesus' life and ministry than he was in the picture that the event gives us about who Jesus is.

It seems significant that Luke follows the story of human concern with another picture which describes spiritual sensitivity. It suggests a real balance in what Luke was telling us about the Lord.

Notice what Luke tells us about the situation:

*As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened **her home** to him. Luke 10:38*

Luke is the only Gospel writer who shares this story with us. He does not tell us why he referred to it as Martha's house. We know that she had a brother. That being the case, in most instances it should be referred to as the home of Lazarus. The son would always be the inheritor instead of the daughter. We can not speak with authority, but it is possible that Martha was a widow whose husband had died and left a home for her. It probably also means that Martha was the older of the two women if not the eldest living child in the family. Martha offered Jesus and his disciples a place to stay whenever they were in or around Jerusalem. The fact that this family lived so close to Bethlehem, suggests that it is entirely possible that they were in some way related to Jesus' family. We can not say that with certainty.

Luke goes quickly to the center for the confrontation:

She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" Luke 10:39,40

Luke portrays Mary as a disciple, but Martha is described as a hostess. Martha may have been distraught because Mary was conducting herself in a manner that they considered only a man was prepared to carry out. Luke does not tell us.

One needs to observe the fact that Martha put Jesus on the spot. He was not the man of the house, but He was being asked to temporarily fill that role. Concerns of this nature should normally have been turned over to Lazarus. Though he was probably younger than his sisters, he would still be the ruler of the house and expected to deal with these kinds of misunderstandings. It gives you a picture of the personality of Martha. She certainly was an outstanding lady, but she was willing to put Jesus on the spot in order to get her way.

Jesus' response was not exactly what martha had in mind:

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"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things. But only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:41

Jesus gave an intense analysis of each of the women. Martha was worried about everything. She was the perfectionist. Perfection was the priority of her life. Mary was selective about her attention. She chose the thing that was most important and focused on that despite customs.

There is a gentle firmness in the words of Jesus. He clearly affirmed the choices of Mary and made it clear that this was not going to be taken away from her just because it disturbed the perfectionist sister.

Conclusion

There is a picture of the Christian life in miniature in this chapter. It is important to pray and obey the law, but it is also important to love one's fellow man at the point in his life where the pain is greatest.

The truth is that our values expose our priorities. What price am I willing to pay to meet the needs of another human being? What choices do we make when there is confrontation between our culture and our faith? Are we as willing to trust what God will do as we are to tell about what God has done? This is at least one facet of what it means to follow Jesus.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 13

LUKE 11:1-54

WOES ON PHARISEES AND LAWYERS

1. In our best Greek documents there are ten paragraphs in Luke chapter 11. On the chart below write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

11:1-4	
11:5-13	
11:14-23	
11:24-26	
11:27,28	
11:29-32	
11:33-36	
11:37-41	
11:42-44	
11:45-54	

2. In 11:1-4, Jesus taught His disciples what we call "the Lord's prayer."
- The disciples had been with Him for quite some time. Why would He need to teach them to pray?
 - Reflect on this prayer.
 - Jesus taught the disciples to pray. What else did He teach?
 - What did you learn as you studied this prayer that you know so well?
3. In 11:5-13, Jesus encouraged His disciples to pray as never before.
- In verses 5-10, Jesus told the story of the persistent friend. What message was Jesus trying to impress on His disciples?
 - What should we learn for ourselves from this story?
 - In 11:11-13, Jesus appealed to the Jewish awareness of joy and celebration of fatherhood.
 - What was Jesus saying in the appeal to this image?
 - What action could Jesus expect as a result of this appeal?
4. In 11:14-23, Jesus cast out a demon and thus enabled a man to be able to speak.
- Scan the paragraph to see if you can find a logical progression in Jesus teaching. Describe it.
 - In 11:21,22, Jesus used the image of the burglary of a home. What was Jesus saying?
 - Jesus, in 11:23, shocked His disciples and listeners with His announcement.
 - What was the announcement?
 - What did He mean by it?

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5. In 11:24-26, Jesus described the return of the unclean spirit.
 - a. Jesus mentioned that the evil spirit went looking through arid places seeking rest.
 1. Can you imagine why Jesus said "arid places?"
 2. Why would the evil spirit need rest?
 - b. In 11:26, Jesus said the evil spirit took "seven other spirits more wicked than itself and they go in and live there."
 1. When evil spirits are cast out, can they return?
 2. Why would an evil spirit need to take seven evil spirits with him to return to the place from which he was cast out?
6. In 11:27,28, a woman pronounced a blessing on Jesus' mother Mary.
 - a. What was the blessing she offered?
 - b. Can you think of anything similar we might say in our culture?
 - c. In 11:28, Jesus responded to the blessing:
 1. Did He agree or disagree with the woman?
 2. Why would Jesus redirect the woman's words of praise?
7. In 11:29-32, Jesus changes the direction of their conversation and rebukes the request for a sign.
 - a. Many people understand this paragraph to say that people would receive **NO** sign at all. What, exactly, did Jesus say?
 - b. What does the fact that "this is a wicked generation" have to do with the idea that they seek a sign?
 - c. Jesus spoke of the "sign of Jonah."
 1. What is that sign?
 2. What did it mean in this context?
 - d. In 11:31, Jesus drew a contrast between "the queen of the south" and "this generation."
 1. Who was the "queen of the south?"
 2. Why would Jesus choose her for this contrast?
 3. Explain what Jesus was saying in this contrast.
 - e. In 11:32, Jesus drew a contrast between the "people of Ninevah" and "this generation".
 1. Why would Jesus choose Ninevah for this contrast?
 2. Explain the contrast that Jesus drew.
 - f. Reflect on this brief paragraph again. How would you summarize what Jesus was saying?
8. In 11:33-36, Jesus used a word picture about a lamp to teach a specific truth.
 - a. What did He say about the lamp?
 - b. What idea does this picture give you?

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- c. Jesus used this word picture, which they understood very well, to explain something they did not understand as well.
 - 1. What was the idea they did **not** understand?
 - 2. What did Jesus say about that idea?
 - d. Summarize what Jesus was saying in this paragraph.
9. In 11:37-41, Luke tells of a dinner invitation which a Pharisee extended to Jesus.
- a. This paragraph immediately follows Jesus' teaching about the eye: the lamp of the body. Can you discover the relationship between these two paragraphs?
 - b. Why would one of the Pharisees, with whom Jesus had just engaged in hot debate, invite Jesus to dinner in his home?
 - c. If failing to wash one's hands before eating was such a serious failing, why would Jesus do it?
 - d. When the host Pharisee reminded Jesus of this omission, Jesus appears to be accusative if not rude.
 - 1. What did Jesus say?
 - 2. Were Jesus' accusations correct?
 - 3. What did Jesus mean by these accusations.
10. In 11:42-44, Jesus makes three condemning remarks about the Pharisees:
- a. Each condemning remark is preceded by the word "woe." What significance, if any, should we attach to this idea?
 - b. In 11:42, Jesus mentions the careful tithing habits of the Pharisees. Since tithing is a Biblical principle, why does Jesus draw attention to this practice?
 - c. The second attack, in 11:43, by Jesus speaks of the Pharisee's desire for chief seats in the synagogue and greetings in the marketplace. What problem is Jesus really identifying?
 - d. In 11:44, Jesus presents the third woe.
 - 1. What is He condemning?
 - 2. Speaking of whitewashed tombs, Jesus again used an image they understood well to illustrate one they might not understand at all.
 - a. What did He say about the whitewashed tombs?
 - b. What parallel did He apply to the Pharisee?
 - e. Summarize what Jesus said about Pharisees in this paragraph.
11. In 11:45-54, Jesus turns His attention to the lawyers: the experts in the law.
- a. In 11:45, a lawyer responds to Jesus' accusation against the Pharisees.
 - 1. What did the lawyer say?
 - 2. What did the lawyer imply by this remark?
 - b. In 11:46, Jesus levels His first attack against the lawyers.
 - 1. What did Jesus say?
 - 2. What did Jesus mean by this attack?

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- c. In 11:47-51, Jesus levels his second attack against the lawyers.
 - 1. What charge did Jesus make?
 - 2. How does Jesus implicate the lawyers with their forefathers?
 - 3. What judgment did Jesus pronounce upon them?
 - d. In 11:52, Jesus makes a third charge against the lawyers.
 - 1. What was His charge against them?
 - 2. Explain what Jesus meant by this charge.
 - e. 11:53,54 describes the reaction of the assembled Pharisees and Lawyers to the charges of Jesus.
 - 1. Did they agree or disagree with Jesus? Why?
 - 2. What was the result of their response?
 - 3. What does this say about the people involved?
12. Review your study of this chapter.
- a. List the kinds of things Jesus did in this chapter.
 - 1. How would you describe His actions?
 - 2. How did the Pharisees and lawyers respond to this kind of action?
 - b. Put yourselves into the story of this chapter. What would Jesus say to you?

LESSON 13: – LUKE 11:1-54

WOES ON PHARISEES AND LAWYERS

In our best Greek documents there are ten paragraphs in Luke chapter 11. They are as follows:

11:1-4	The Lord's Prayer
11:5-13	Disciples Encouraged to Pray
11:14-23	Cast Out Demons by Beelzebub?
11:24-26	Unclean Spirits Return
11:27,28	Jesus Returns a Blessing
11:29-32	Jesus Rebukes a Plea for a Sign
11:33-36	The Light of the Body
11:37-41	Jesus Dines with Pharisee
11:42-44	Three Woes to the Pharisees
11:45-54	Three Woes to the Lawyers

11:1-4 The Lord's Prayer

Again, Luke begins the paragraph with a generalized time designation. Luke identifies it in this manner:

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. Luke 11:1a

There is no suggestion that this experience immediately followed the events of the conclusion of chapter 10, nor does Luke suggest that it happened in the same place. It is one more piece of evidence that Luke apparently put a group of experiences together with less consideration for time or location than for content.

This paragraph is a bit awkward for a number of Christians. That is because they emphasize the freedom to pray without a formula. The element of formula is present, to some extent, but it is not primary.

A rabbi taught, as often as possible, by example or illustration. Notice how Luke tells the story in this instance:

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples. Luke 11:1

This is interesting because there seems to be little reason to believe that they were new disciples. They had apparently been with Him for some time when the unnamed disciple made this request.

The different religious groups, in the time of Jesus, were distinguishable from one another, by their patterns of prayer. The Sadducees used a different pattern of prayer than the Essenes; the Pharisees would use a different pattern of prayer than the Hellenists. This may, in part, account for the request of the disciples to be taught to pray. They may have been asking for Jesus to identify their pattern of prayer. John taught his disciples a specific pattern; Jesus should give one to His disciples as well.

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We must remember that the prayer of Jesus follows closely one or more of the Kaddish which the Jews recited so often. The Kaddish Shalem for the evening service of Yom Kippur would read as follows:

Hallowed and enhanced may He be throughout the world of His own creation. May He cause His sovereignty so to be accepted, during our life and the life of all Israel. And let us say: Amen.

Glorified and celebrated, lauded and praised, acclaimed and honored, extolled and exalted may the Holy One be, beyond all song and psalm, beyond all tributes which man can utter. And let us say: Amen.

May the prayers and pleas of the whole House of Israel be accepted by our Father in Heaven. And let us say: Amen.

Let there be abundant peace from Heaven, with life's goodness for us and for all the people of Israel. And let us say: Amen

He who brings peace to His universe will bring peace to us and to all the people of Israel. And let us say: Amen.¹

This quote makes it clear that Jesus did not quote the Kaddish prayer. It should be noted, however, that there are a number of similarities between this Kaddish and the Lord's prayer. It is clear that Jesus was not preparing a prayer for the disciples that was totally foreign to their thinking. They had heard many of these ideas expressed in these words before.

The first word of the prayer tells something of the thinking of Jesus. He instructed them to begin their prayer with the word "Father." Their prayers, in Hebrew, used the very intimate word "abba." This word can be translated "daddy" or "dearest Father." In an unobtrusive way, Jesus was inviting the disciples to share this personal, family relationship that He experienced with the Father.

The idea of father, to the Jewish people, means much more than progenitor or physical ancestor. They thought of "father" as their provider. A father was a very close companion to his children. He was their guide; the one who was responsible to shape their values and their awareness of their own worth. Father was the one who was covenanted to protect his children even at the cost of his life. Father was the one to be obeyed; the one who forgave and restored when they failed.

The words "who art in heaven," appear in the Gospel of Matthew, but not in Luke. Really, the words are omitted from our best documents for both Matthew and Luke. These words do appear in the Greek text from which the King James Version was translated.

Immediately following the name for God, Jesus makes two affirmations concerning the greatness of God.

Hallowed be your name ... Luke 11:2b

One might translate this phrase more literally, "let your name be hallowed." Jesus was not suggesting that the disciples could make the name of God holy by this affirmation. In a

¹ Rabbi Jules Harlow, Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, A Prayer Book For the Days of Awe, (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 1973) p.777

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way that we do not fully understand, the people of that part of the world thought of a person's name as being an integral part of the person. When you said something about a person's name, you were saying it about the person. When Jesus ascribed holiness to the name of God, He was worshipfully acknowledging that God, indeed, was holy, in a way no other person could ever be holy.

In a similar statement of adoration and affirmation Jesus said:

... your kingdom come Luke 11:2c

Both this and the previous phrases are in the form of a command. In both instances, however, Jesus was not commanding the Father to act in a certain way. It was a way of acknowledging His desire that the kingdom of the Father might come. This statement of adoration and praise is a yearning rather than a military command. You might say it in this way: "I long for your kingdom to come." There was an urgency in the heart of Jesus for the kingdom to come.

The prayer turns from adoration to petition in verses three and four.

Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. Luke 11:3,4

The request, that Jesus suggested, does not remove the need to trust God for our needs. It is a way of saying, "God each day give us the food we need for that day." The emphasis is on divine provision, not on stockpiling so as not to need to trust. Some have understood this request as a parallel to what God did for Israel in the wilderness as He provided manna each day and none could be kept from one day to the next just in case none came that day.

The request for forgiveness is an acknowledgment that God is the only one who can forgive. Notice, however, that the request is followed by a reason for it. "forgive our sins **because** we have forgiven everyone who sins against us." If we take Jesus instruction seriously, it should cause us to think carefully about our relationships. Our forgiveness of others is irrevocably involved in the securing of our own forgiveness. It is an expression of the "golden rule"; the Biblical instruction:

Do to others as you would have them do to you. Luke 6:31

The third petition has been a source of concern for some people. Notice what Jesus said:

...And lead us not into temptation. Luke 11:4c

The word lead "eisfero" εἰσφέρω"" means to bring in. Some are concerned about the instruction feeling that it suggests to them that without this petition God would lead them into temptation. This conflicts with their understanding of God. God wants to deliver us from temptation rather than lead us into it. One parishioner refused to repeat the prayer because of this. It is true that God wants us to be victorious over temptation. James is absolutely correct when He said:

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. James 1:13,14

Notice that he used the word "temptation" "peirasmos," "πειράσμος," , which means "trial or test." The precise meaning of the word must be gained from the context in which it is used. It is usually used to describe an experience intended to test for the purpose of strengthening or to identify for the person involved just how strong or weak he is. It can also be used for a negative purpose of testing a person in order to destroy their relationship with God. It should also be noted that our best Greek documents include another clause - "but deliver us from the evil one." This clause is present in the translation of the parallel passage in Matthew 6:13.

11:5-13 - The Disciples Encouraged to Pray

In this paragraph, Jesus used two images to appeal to the disciples to pray.

11:5-10 - The Persistent Friend

This complete story is found only in the Gospel of Luke, but it is found, partially, in Matthew 6,7. This particular image is given in two parts:

1. The story - 11:5-8
 2. The parallel application - 11:9,10
- a. The story

The first thing you discover about this story is that it is fictitious. Notice how Jesus told it:

Then he said to them. "suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'" Luke 11:5-7

This story existed only in the mind of Jesus. That is not a problem because Jesus made it clear that it was not a true story when he said "suppose." Though this is a fictitious story, the scenario was not unusual at all. In the Jerusalem area, it would be unusual for a person to be traveling near midnight, though people commonly travel at night in the desert. On the other hand, if a person received guests at midnight and had insufficient food to share with them, he would not be reluctant to go to a neighbor at any hour for two reasons:

1. The law of hospitality required that he provide food for his guest.
2. When a guest came into the community, no matter what house he approached, he would be considered the guest of the entire village and everyone would be under the law of hospitality to provide for his needs.

Jesus continued to weave the story in these words:

"Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'" Luke 11:7

Again Jesus painted a very realistic picture. Many homes in Jerusalem were composed of a single room. They went to great lengths to prevent their homes from being broken into. To remove these devices would in all probability wake the whole family.

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In these single-room houses, obviously the entire family would sleep in one room. In most instances, they slept on a single mat and covered with a single cover. It would be most difficult, if not impossible, for the father to get to the door and remove the locking device without waking the children. The man of the house, however, would know full well that was his responsibility to help.

Having set the stage by the use of the story, Jesus now goes to the heart of his purpose of telling the story in the first place.

"I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs." Luke 11:8

Jesus points out a humorous side of the picture that everyone who heard would understand. The father of a family would do almost anything to keep a persistent neighbor from waking his entire family. That is the point that Jesus is making in this story.

b. The parallel application

The character of this parallel is a key to what Jesus is trying to say in the whole story. Notice what He said:

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you: seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." Luke 11:9,10

Notice, there is no mention of a discussion about whether it is inconvenient or not. Knockers receive. Jesus presented the story as a contrast with the way in which God treats us. We will often find ourselves in the place of the man who came and knocked on the door. Jesus is not saying, "bother God enough and He will give you what you want," though that is the way some people interpret this story. Jesus was saying that God is eager to give us what we need. Knock and God will open; ask and God will give you what you need; seek and you will find God eager to help you find; it is a picture of God who is eager and generous rather than reluctant to meet needs.

11:11-13 - The Appeal To Fatherhood

In this picture, Jesus appeals to the audience itself. He did so in this manner:

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish will give him a snake instead; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?" Luke 11:11,12

The answer to Jesus' question would be, "absolutely none!" These questions would shock His audience. A Jewish father was known for his great desire to enjoy his children, provide abundantly for their needs and meet every possible desire. A father may not be able to give a child what he wanted, but he would never give him something that would do him harm, like giving him a snake. No Jewish father would give his child anything that would deceive him or destroy his life, like giving him a scorpion.

That is precisely the parallel that Jesus is making. Notice how Jesus draws His conclusion:

*"If you **then**, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Luke 11:13*

It is unthinkable that a Jewish father would do his child harm, he was just human. Think how much more God desires to do good things for those whom He identifies as His children. The gift the heavenly Father gives is His Holy Spirit. What better gift could the Father give than that His Holy Spirit would dwell within us? What greater help could we ask? By the way, notice that the gift is to those who "ask Him."

11:14-23 - Cast Out Demons by Beelzebub?

On one occasion, a man was unable to speak because he was possessed of a mute spirit. Luke tells the story in this fashion:

Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been dumb spoke, and the crowd was amazed. Luke 11:14

The most important factor to be considered in this experience was that the man was released from the power of this demon. The man spoke and he had been unable to do that previously.

Out of this experience there were a number of reactions. Although all the people saw the same miracle, not all of them reacted in the same way. First, some of the people were amazed. They probably had never seen such a miracle. It was clear to them that this was really a miracle and they were astonished at its greatness. From the text, it appears that the majority of the crowd fell into this category.

On the other hand, there were others who saw the miracle, but they saw it as deception, not miraculous. These people accused Jesus of casting out the demon by the power of Beelzebub. Beelzebub was a pagan deity. It was thought of in a number of ways. Some thought of this deity as the "dung god." Others thought of Beelzebub as another name for "Ba'al," who was worshipped by the Philistines and others. Jewish religious leaders thought of him as prince of the demons. Whatever their particular belief, they were accusing Jesus of using demonic power to remove the demon which bound this man in silence.

There were still others who were not quite ready to believe in Jesus and they demanded a sign. The demand for a sign was appropriate, in their thinking, because they understood that the Messiah, when He came, would do signs and wonders. They were simply wanting Jesus to demonstrate beyond the shadow of a doubt that He was the Messiah. This was a bit unusual in that Jesus had just concluded a miracle in their presence.

In the midst of these reactions, Jesus responded. Notice that the first thing Luke said about the situation was that Jesus knew their thoughts and on the basis of that knowledge, He spoke to them. Jesus responded in a very reasoned manner. It was as follows:

1. He began with a principle
2. He applied this principle to their situation.
3. He explained why these things were true.
4. He identified the implications of the situation.
5. He illustrated the truth He was teaching.

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The principle, with which Jesus began His reply, was a simple one: a kingdom divided against itself will fall. Others might wish to say it another way: unity is essential to continuity. In our culture this fact is most obvious in team sports. The very best teams can be defeated by a much weaker team if there is no unity in the stronger team. It is just as true in the spiritual realm.

Jesus applied this principle in their situation. They had accused Him of casting out demons by the prince of demons. He explained it in this way:

*"If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand?"
Luke 11:18*

Jesus' application of this truth to their situation was another appeal to reason. Jesus explained that if Satan's kingdom was divided against itself, then they had nothing to worry about; that kingdom would be destroyed. He was carefully pointing out just how faulty their reasoning was, without saying it in so many words. When the religious leaders could not trap Jesus by their legitimate questions, they turned to slander, and Jesus was pointing out just how far off base they were. It was very polite, but very direct and they certainly knew it.

In 5:18b Jesus explained why he had given this brief discourse on the problems of their reasoning.

*"...I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub."
Luke 11:18b*

They had mistaken His gentleness for weakness and left themselves wide open for the careful reasoning of Jesus.

Jesus continued by explaining why His reasoned approach was true. In the process, they put themselves in a very embarrassing position. He said:

"Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then they will be your judges." Luke 11:19

All of the people who listened knew that there were those of the religious leadership who did in fact attempt to exorcise demons. As far back as Solomon there were instructions as to how to drive out demons. This being true, it was clear that as the religious leaders tried to ensnare Jesus, through this means, the fact that some of their own were involved in the same venture opened them up to the same charge. That was not what these leaders had in mind when they slandered Jesus with this charge.

The picture of a passive Jesus is severely damaged in these scenes. Jesus was not finished with the issue. He continued with these implications.

"...but if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you." Luke 11:20

The use of the word "but" indicates the presence of a very strong contrast. Jesus contrasted their charge that he cast out demons by Beelzebub with another possibility. He was saying that it is just as possible that he had dealt with this demon by the power of God, or as Matthew reports it, this was accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit. In that case, the subtle inference, which was lost on no one, dealt a severe blow to the cause of the religious leaders: it is just as possible that Jesus was driving out this demon by the

power of God. In that case, these religious leaders would have embarrassed themselves by not only taking a stand against God, but blaspheming God by charging that the work of God was the work of Satan. Clearly, Jesus was painting a vivid picture of the struggle between the forces of good and evil., with the forces for good inflicting heavy damages on the forces of evil.

It would be easy to miss the point that Jesus mentions the fact that with this driving out of the demon, the kingdom of God has come to them. This clearly identifies the whole experience as a Messianic miracle that Jesus did not want them to miss.

Why does Jesus speak of the "finger of God" in this instance? References to the power of God, especially in the Old Testament, refer to the arm of God. The finger is one of the weakest parts of the entire arm. It appears that Jesus draws a graphic image that these people would immediately understand. Jesus employs the means which is considered the weakest and still totally defeats the demon and drives him out.

Jesus concludes this discussion by the use of an illustration with which everyone was well acquainted.

*"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils."
Luke 11:21, 22*

Remember, the issue under discussion was whether or not Jesus cast out the demon by the power of Beelzebub. Then, as now, house theft was not uncommon. The listeners knew exactly what Jesus was saying. Jesus used something that the people knew well to help explain something that they did not understand.

The man had no spiritual power to protect himself from the demon. The demon thus took control of the life. On the other hand, the demon was no match for the power of God expressed in Christ Jesus. Thus the man was delivered and was able to speak.

Still, Jesus was not finished. He spoke in bold terms that the religious leaders could not possibly have missed when He said:

"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters." Luke 11:23

It is safer for the religious leaders to point out the flaws in anyone who was not one of their followers. No one would think ill of them for that. Jesus, however, cast the whole situation in sharper terms. For Jesus, there was no middle ground. In two ways, He described His relationship to these opponents:

1. People are either with Him or against Him.
2. People are either helping to build the kingdom or helping to tear it down. They are either gathering people into the kingdom with Jesus or they are attempting to scatter the members of the kingdom of God.

Certainly these religious leaders were not accustomed to being thought of as people who resist and attempt to destroy the kingdom of God. This gives us one more glimpse of Jesus' outlook. The image of a passive Jesus does not match what one finds in the Gospel records.

11:24-26 - The Unclean Spirits Return

In these brief three verses, Jesus dealt with what happens when evil is cleared from a life, but nothing replaces that evil. Notice how Jesus describes the process:

"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.'" Luke 11:24

The first thing to notice about this statement is that it is an "evil spirit." The word for evil is literally "unclean" "akatharos - "ἀκάθαρτος" from which we get our English word cathartic. The mention of "arid places" is a reference to a desert area. It was widely thought, in that day, that the desert was the abode of demons. There were those who thought that some of the prophets were under the influence of demons because they had been in the desert. Some leaders thought the same thing of John the Baptist as well as the Essenes because they lived in the desert areas.

Jesus taught that the demon, when he came out of the man, went to the desert, but did not find a place of rest. This word for rest does not mean inactivity. It is "anapausis" "ἀναπαύσις" and literally refers to refreshment. It is the word used regularly in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, to identify the Sabbath rest. It is a refreshment in work rather than from work. The idea Jesus was conveying was that the demon searched for a place to reside, but found none.

Jesus continued,

"Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' " Luke 11:24b

Jesus described the demon as intelligent, but not all-powerful. Jesus was also saying that when a demon has been removed from a person it does not mean that the demon will never return if permitted to do so.

Jesus continues with His message and at the same time gives vital information concerning the behavior of demons.

"When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order." Luke 11:25

The inference here is that when the demon left, the house was not clean and it was not in order. This suggests that the demon left a devastated person. It also suggests that the problems created by the demon's presence can be changed.

Again, Jesus continues His teaching concerning the demon's presence.

"Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first." Luke 11:26

Jesus deals carefully with the issue of power between God and demons. Clearly, the demon is not as powerful as God. This is the reason that he had to go get seven other demons who were more wicked than himself. Together they can overcome the power of the man involved, but are **not** greater than the power of God. It is possible for the demon to return and occupy the person previously possessed. These beings take over the life of the person and make it far worse than when just the one demon lived there.

11:27, 28 - Jesus Returns a Blessing

In the midst of the teaching of Jesus, a woman spoke up and pronounced a blessing upon Jesus' mother. The woman said:

"Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." Luke 11:27

This was a common blessing. Everyone in the crowd had heard it before. It appears to be an affirmation. We have similar situations in our culture. If a person gives evidence of good upbringing, a person might say to him "You must have had a wonderful mother."

Jesus responded to her affirmation in a way that many people have misunderstood. He said:

*"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."
Luke 11:28*

Notice that Jesus did not disagree with what the woman said about Mary. He rather redirected her words of praise. Some people have taken this to mean that Jesus was making a negative statement about His mother, Mary. Biblically, there is a reason to believe that Jesus and His family had differences of opinion over His decision to leave the family, as its bread-winner, and begin His ministry. This, however, does not mean that in this instance Jesus has made a derogatory statement about Mary. Jesus on all occasions tried to divert attention from Himself and His family and toward God and the ministry to which the Father had sent Him. I believe that this is just one more example of that. He was saying that it was far more important to focus attention upon obedience to God than to recognize Him or His family.

11:29-32 - Jesus Rebukes Plea for a Sign

Luke begins this paragraph telling us that the crowds were increasing. This is usually thought of as a good sign. Actually, it suggests several possibilities:

1. Jesus was becoming increasingly popular with the people.
2. It could also indicate that people were becoming more interested for novelty reasons.
3. It could also be because Jesus was a controversial figure in the area.

I believe that it was for all of these reasons. In some instances it suggests that Jesus was reaching people with the Good News, but novelty and controversy are also powerful means to draw a crowd.

As the crowds gathered and increased, Jesus began to preach to them"

*"This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it **except** the sign of Jonah." Luke 11:29b*

So much for a passive Jesus! Many people misunderstand this verse. For these people, the text ends with the words, "It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it..." The sign of Jonah was given, but no other sign was given to these people.

People asked for a sign because it was written in the Old Testament that the coming Messiah, the Anointed One, would perform great miracles. The miracles were to confirm what the people already believed, not to enable them to believe. Signs never take the place of belief; they only confirm what one already accepts to the point of risk.

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The "sign of Jonah" describes a comparison between the three days Jonah was in the "belly of a whale" and the three days Jesus was in the tomb. Jesus said that this would be a sign to this generation of the people of Israel.

In this paragraph Jesus drew somewhat of a parallel between three situations in order to indict the people of His generation who did not believe. The three situations are as follows:

1. The Queen of Sheba came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.
2. The people of Ninevah listened to the preaching of Jonah.
3. The people of Jerusalem would not listen to the preaching of Jesus.

The words of Jesus are stinging indictments. He was saying that the Queen of Sheba traveled across most of the then known world to listen to the wisdom of Solomon. Now, however, one who is greater than Solomon is with them and they will not listen to him. Therefore, the Queen of Sheba will stand to condemn this generation of disbelievers in the judgment.

Again, the people of Ninevah, as sinful as they were, listened to the preaching of Jonah and changed their lives. One who is far greater than Jonah is among the people of Israel and they will not listen to His message. Therefore, the men of Ninevah will also stand to condemn this generation of Israel because they would not believe, when one who was even greater than Jonah came to preach to them.

11:33-36 - The Light of the Body

This brief paragraph is made up of two illustrations which are intended to shed light on the content of the previous paragraph. The two illustrations are as follows:

1. The lamp
2. The human eye

Jesus begins this paragraph with an admittedly ridiculous idea.

"No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light." Luke 11:33

As Jesus said, no one would do that. Luke quotes Jesus as saying:

"no one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden or under a bowl." Luke 11:33a

Mark states it this way:

*"Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or **a bed**?" Mark 4:21*

While Matthew speaks of it in these terms:

Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl..." Matthew 5:15

There are a number of givens in these statements:

1. Light is desperately needed.
2. That light comes from outside ourselves, not from within.

3. We must make the most effective use of that light or pay the consequences.

Lamps were simply small containers to hold the oil with an opening to pour in the oil and another place from which a wick protruded. Oil was quite abundant, but the means for starting a fire was not. They did not have matches. A major consideration with their lamps was the preservation of their flame. This was accomplished by keeping the lamp lit at all times. To keep from using prohibitive amounts of fuel, they placed a bowl upside down over the lamp. In this situation the flame would have gone out except that they put two holes in this bowl to allow small amounts of oxygen to enter the chamber and keep the flame alive without using too much fuel.

Jesus was saying, if you want to protect the flame, put a bowl over the lamp, but that is not a way to get light to see in the room.

To get light for the room, one must place the lamp high on its stand so that the light can penetrate the darkness. Only in this manner can people benefit from the light of the lamp.

The second illustration is the human eye. Notice the way Jesus speaks of the eye:

"Your eye is the lamp of the body." Luke 11:34a

Jesus was not saying that the eye creates light for the body. He was saying that the eye was the means by which light enters into the body.

Jesus continues with this picture of light:

"When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body is full of darkness." Luke 11:34b

The Greek text reads a bit differently:

*"Therefore, when your eye is **single**, the body is also bright: **but** when the **eye** is evil, your body is dark." Luke 11:34b*

By "single" Jesus meant the opposite of a divided heart. It is a situation where one concern, God, is more important than any other consideration. Jesus was saying, when God is the top priority; the focus of attention of your life, the entire body/life is full of light. In the New Testament, light is often a symbol of righteousness. Jesus often used it in that way.

On the other hand, the word "bad" is "ponaeros," "ποναιρός" which means evil which causes pain, sorrow and widespread evil. Jesus was saying that when such evil permeates the life, darkness, a symbol of evil, will permeate the entire life of the person.

Jesus therefore follows this explanation with a command:

"See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness." Luke 11:35

This is a command which urges the disciple to be alert and very much aware of his own condition. This is a command warning against obvious devastating results.

Verse 36 forms the conclusion of Jesus message. In it He really summarizes what He has been teaching.

*"Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you."
Luke 11:36*

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The results are the reason that all of this is important. If God is our most important priority, our lives will be full of light/righteousness. On the other hand, if our allegiance is divided, then darkness/evil will hold the prominent place in our lives.

11:37-41 - Jesus Dines with a Pharisee

In the Gospel of Luke, it appears that this paragraph immediately follows the previous teaching. This is surprising since Jesus had just come under attack by the Pharisees and when the debate was ended a Pharisee invited Jesus to come to his home to eat with him.

This is interesting since such a meal would be very symbolic. To invite someone to dinner, with whom there had been division or enmity, was a way of indicating to all concerned that there was forgiveness and restoration. You may remember that in the story of the Prodigal Son, the father insisted on having a feast. He wanted his younger son and everyone else to know that forgiveness was real. It will become immediately clear that this was not quite true in this Pharisee's house. Is it possible that this Pharisee was the one who pressed Jesus so intensely in the previous debate? It is very possible, but we can not be certain.

Nevertheless, Jesus accepted the invitation and went to be the guest of the Pharisee. Luke described the event in these words:

"When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. But the Pharisee, noticing that Jesus did not first wash before the meal, was surprised." Luke 11:37, 38

It is clear, from other portions of the Gospels, that Jesus was very familiar with the rules of the Jews and the requirement of local etiquette. One of those rules of the Jews was that they must wash their hands before they eat. This was a decision of the Rabbi's and not a command of God.

The text does not say, but it appears that Jesus did this intentionally in order to gain an opportunity to teach the Pharisee who had challenged Him so much concerning the rules laid down by the Rabbi's.

Whatever the case, Luke notes that the Pharisee was surprised that Jesus did not observe this instruction to wash before meals. The word "surprised" means to marvel, to be quite shocked. It is the same word that was used to describe the response of the crowd, in Luke 11:14, when Jesus healed the man who was unable to speak because a spirit controlled his life. Luke does not tell us, but it appears that there was extensive conversation between the two that is not recorded in the text.

Jesus' answer to the Pharisee, in Luke 11:39-44, is a very strong statement. In three different ways Jesus points out the difference between what they are and what they appear to be. These confrontations are couched in the language of a prophet of God. The use of this literary tool would not be wasted on the Pharisees. Jesus summarized the indictments He was about to make as follows:

Then the Lord said to him, "Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? But give what is inside the dish to the poor, and everything will be clean for you." Luke 11:39-41

These are biting words, but they are both true and intended to help the Pharisee see himself. Jesus' attack on the religious life of the Pharisees is couched in symbolic terms. Remember, the discussion began when Jesus did not wash his hands before lying down to eat at the Pharisee's table. Jesus is saying that the Pharisees are so very careful about ceremonial washings; the things that deal with the outside of the body, but that they take no care for the values and priorities which motivate the individual; that which is inside the person. Barclay gives us some indication about just how careful the Pharisees were concerning these ceremonial laws.

Large stone vessels of water were specially kept for the purpose because ordinary water might be unclean; the amount of water used must be at least a quarter of a log, that is enough to fill one and one half egg-shells. first the water must be poured over the hands beginning at the tips of the fingers and running right up to the wrist. Then the palm of each hand must be cleansed by rubbing the fist of the other hand into it. Finally, water must again be over the hand, this time beginning at the wrist and running down to the fingertips. To the Pharisee to omit the slightest detail of this was to sin.²

Jesus gave the Pharisee a prophetic instruction. He told him to give to the poor what was inside the dish. The things that were inside the dish were varied and tragic. The Pharisees had a robust business going in the monopolies they held concerning the sacrifices in the temple. These same Pharisees sought ways to lend money to the widows, knowing full well that the widow could not repay and thus would be eligible for the lender to sell the widow and all she owned. The problem with this was that it was illegal, according to Jewish law, for a person to lend to a widow for high interest, or to take away what little she possessed. Jesus was saying, be as concerned about the greed in your heart as you are about the soiling of your hands and you will be a righteous man. These were harsh words, but they were the truth.

11:42-44 - Three Woes to the Pharisees

The first way that Jesus pointed out the differences between what the Pharisee was and what he appeared to be is found in Luke 11:42. Jesus said,

*"Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone."
Luke 11:42*

Most of us know what mint is. We might be less familiar with "rue." Rue, "peganon," "πέγανον," was an herb which was found in many parts of Palestine. In its cultivated form, it was required to be tithed. On the other hand, when found in the wild, it was not required to be tithed. The Pharisees were so concerned about these external, man-made laws that they tithed even the rue which grew wild.

While the Pharisees were very careful about the minutia of their ritual laws, they completely ignored the more important commands to love and justice which came from

² William Barclay, *The gospel of Luke*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965) p. 158.

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God and not just the Rabbis. The use of the word "woe" was a way that prophets couched their denunciations of the sins of the people. Everyone, especially the Pharisees, would be keenly aware of this understanding. Jesus makes a direct attack on the Pharisees. He claimed that they were very careful about trivia and unconcerned about the important things in the teaching of the law. This was a devastating charge.

As always, Jesus did not just denounce the sin, He gave instructions concerning the way to change their lifestyle and values. We must remember that Jesus did not denounce the tithing of the few seeds of herbs that grew in the Pharisee's garden. Jesus was rather saying, I want you to continue to do that, but I also want you to be at least as careful to demonstrate justice to all people and share the love of God with everyone you meet.

Jesus directed the second "woe" against the pride of the Pharisees.

"Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces." Luke 11:43

As in most cultures, the Jews had several symbolic ways to indicate the importance of a person. In Matthew 23:5, Jesus chided the Pharisees because of the long fringe they placed on their outer garments. Jesus phrased it in these words:

"Everything they do is done for men to see: they make their phylacteries wide and the tassels of their prayer shawls long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi'"
Matthew 23:5-7

This is the parallel passage in Matthew. In that instance, Jesus attributed their actions to a desire for men to see them. Matthew quotes Jesus giving six illustrations of what He meant by this accusation.

1. Wide Phylacteries.
2. Long tassels on their prayer shawls.
3. The place of honor at banquets.
4. Most important seats at the synagogue.
5. Long greetings in the marketplace.
6. Have people call them "Rabbi."

In Luke's account, there are only two illustrations of pride:

1. Love the most important seats in the synagogue.
2. They loved to be greeted in the marketplace

"The most important seats in the synagogue" are the subject of some disagreement. These seats were probably on the platform which the Jews call the "bema." These seats would face the congregation. The Pharisees sitting there would be in full view of everyone in the synagogue. This would not be true if these seats were simply in the front row center in front of the Ark, where the Torah was kept, as some scholars believe. This place, wherever it was located was reserved for the honored guests and local individuals held in special esteem. The further back in the sanctuary one was located, the less important he

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was considered to be. Singling out this phenomenon, Jesus was attacking their pride in their position in the community.

The "greetings in the marketplace" was much the same way. A servant could go through the marketplace and no one would notice. Let the Rabbi enter the area and he would be greeted by everyone. The Pharisees not only wanted to be the recipients of such greetings but they would be especially pleased if these greetings were long and lavish. Again, Jesus was attacking their longing for symbols of importance which fed their feelings of pride in their position in the community.

The third "woe" was not less direct.

"Woe to you because you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it." Luke 11:44

In that day, not all graves were in cemeteries as they are today. On another occasion Jesus dealt with the same issue.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. Matthew 23:27

At the time of great feasts, pilgrims would come from all over to take part in the ceremonies. In order to be able to participate, they had to be ceremonially clean. This meant, among other things, that they could not touch a dead body or anything that had touched a dead body. This meant that if they touched a grave, knowingly or unknowingly, they may have traveled for weeks to participate, but they were unclean and they could not take part. To guard against this, the people of Jerusalem would go out into the areas around the city and whitewash the graves so that no one would touch them, walk over them or sit on them by mistake.

In our text, Jesus was saying that though the Pharisees were the religious leaders of the community, people who came in touch with them could unknowingly become unclean as if the Pharisees were dead men. This was an attack on the spiritual life of the Pharisees. This was a very serious attack because they thought of themselves as the super spiritual people of all Israel.

Put yourself into the shoes of the host of the dinner. You bring in a teacher that you probably hope to trap in His words and He humiliates you and all your guests. How would you feel? I suspect that they felt the same way.

Notice again the things that Jesus attacked in the lives of the Pharisees:

1. They were phony - Tithed seeds, but ignored justice
2. They were proud of their position
3. They were a source of spiritual uncleanness to all who came in touch with them.

11:45-54 - Three Woes to the Lawyers

Such an attack had to leave the people in the room in screaming silence. Luke gives us a hint of just how traumatic it was:

"One of the experts in the law answered him, 'Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.'" Luke 11:45

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The words of this Scribe were very proper, but dripping with anger just the same. He referred to Jesus as "Teacher", but at the same time accused Jesus of insulting His host, the rest of the Pharisees present and the "experts in the law," Scribes, as well. The word "insult" "hubridzo" "ὕβριζω" was a very strong attack. This was the strongest form of insult they could imagine. It would not seem worse, to them, to be called a "gentile." The Scribe had dropped the gauntlet. It was now one against the room-full.

Jesus responded to the cutting attack.

"Jesus replied, 'And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.'" Luke 11:47

Again, Jesus presents Himself as a prophet and announces woes against the sins of the Scribes. These men were really expert in the interpretation of the law. This meant that they could split hairs a dozen ways to place responsibilities upon people that they were in no position to carry out. The expertise of the Scribes also meant that they knew the law so well that they could figure out a way to interpret the law so that they would not be bound by the same rulings that became a devastating burden on those untutored in the law. The image Jesus used was pointed to say the least. He portrayed the untutored as struggling to bear unbearable burdens created by the Scribes, who at the same time would not so much as lift a finger to help the helpless.

Imagine yourself in the place of these self-righteous, experts of the law. Jesus has not only attacked you as no one else would dare to do, He has done it publicly, probably in the presence of some of those whom you had placed in that impossible situation. He did not make any friends with this attack, but He did tell the truth.

Without waiting for a reply, Jesus again pronounced another prophetic "woe" upon the "Experts in the law." He said:

"Woe to you because you build tombs for the prophets and it was your forefathers who killed them. So you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs." Luke 11:47,48

There would be nothing wrong with building tombs for the prophets. It is the fact that this generation was behaving as their forefathers had done and being equally guilty, were building tombs for the prophets as though they were doing something spiritual and noble. The truth was that if the prophets had been alive in Jesus' day, they would have prophesied as Jesus did. The killing of the prophets and the building of the tombs were separated by hundreds of years. Nevertheless, Jesus associates the "experts in the law" as being accomplices with those who killed the prophets. There was hardly anyone so despised by God as those who killed the prophets. Jesus' attack was a stinging indictment to say the least.

Jesus continued:

"Because of this God in his wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute. Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Able to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar

and the sanctuary. Yes I tell you this generation will be held responsible for it all." Luke 11:49-51

This was one of the greatest indictments to be found in Scripture. They were not only to be held responsible for His blood, but for every prophet who was put to death from the beginning of time. Jesus was saying that they were more responsible for evil than anyone else in the world. The way they burdened people down, but did nothing themselves was far worse than what happened when the sanctuary itself was defiled by the slaying of the prophet between the alter and the sanctuary.

Jesus pronounced a third prophetic "woe."

"Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering." Luke 11:52

"the experts in the law" made the law incomprehensible to the common man. The experts decreed that one could only travel a certain distance on the Sabbath. One could however, travel a greater distance on water on the Sabbath. They, therefore, put water in a pouch on which they rode in order to travel farther on the Sabbath. One was not permitted to tie a knot in a rope on Sabbath, but it was not forbidden to tie a knot in a woman's belt on Sabbath, so one could tie a knot in a woman's belt and draw water in that way. One could not carry a burden in his arms on Sabbath, but it was not forbidden to carry a burden with your shoe because that was not the usual way to bear a burden. With all the confusion of rules and exceptions, the experts rendered the Torah confusing and useless to the common people, when God gave it to be a comfort to them. Jesus was saying that these common people had a desire to serve and please God and they were deterred from that pursuit by the hairsplitting interpretations of the experts. People called to help bring the common man closer to God were in fact guilty of driving people away from God and His word.

Think for a moment about this dinner to which the Pharisee invited Jesus. Certainly he was sorry that he extended the invitation. What was intended to be a time of enjoyment and, if possible, to trap Jesus turned out to be an evening of anger and bitterness.

Luke summarized it very well when he said:

"When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say." Luke 11:53-54

Prior to this there had been confrontations with the religious leaders. Luke was saying that this is the dividing point in the ministry of Jesus. From this point on the entire religious community began to look intensely for ways and means to do away with Jesus. They didn't just want to trap Him, they wanted to kill Him. This was their preoccupation for the rest of His ministry.

Conclusion

Luke began the chapter with Jesus teaching the disciples to pray, but it ends with the religious leaders more angry and determined to kill Jesus than ever before. In between these two points, Jesus was busy doing good things:

1. He taught the disciples to pray.

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2. He healed a man possessed by a demon.
3. He taught the great crowds about the sign of Jonah.
4. He taught the crowds about the need for singleness of motive and purpose.
5. He pointed out for the Pharisees and "experts in the law", if they would only listen, what righteousness was really all about.

We tend to think in different terms. We operate under the idea that if you do good things, people will like you and speak well of you. that may be true, but only up to the point where you love them enough to warn them concerning the error of their direction in life.

Jesus calls us to follow Him. That includes loving people enough to risk their disapproval in reminding them of the consequences when we sense that they are heading in a direction contrary to the will of God. We must ask ourselves if we are willing to love that much. Are we willing to risk disapproval and harm in order to try to help a person become aware of the error of their direction in life? Does our commitment to God; our commitment to follow Jesus reach beyond the point where we are also identified with His pain and suffering? We need to think on these things.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 14

LUKE 12:1-59

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1. In our best Greek manuscripts, there are 10 paragraphs in Luke 12. On the table below, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

12:1-3	
12:4-7	
12:8-12	
12:13-21	
12:22-34	
12:35-40	
12:41-48	
12:49-53	
12:54-56	
12:57-59	

2. In 12:1-3, Jesus warns people about the "leaven of the Pharisees."
- Put yourself in the place of a Pharisee. How would you feel about what Jesus said?
 - Look carefully at the descriptive images Jesus used in these verses. What ideas was he trying to convey?
3. In 12:4-7, Jesus was encouraging the crowd.
- If you were one of the people in the crowd, how would you feel when Jesus spoke as He did in 12:4, 5?
 - What was Jesus saying in that instruction?
 - Who is the one Jesus instructs them to fear?
 - What is the importance of the question about sparrows? How is this a help to us?
4. In 12:8-12, Jesus continued to teach this huge crowd.
- Read 12:8 a few times. What literary relationship do you find there?
 - How does this information help you interpret the paragraph?
 - In 12:9 Jesus talked about people who disown Him. He said that He would also disown them before the angels of God. Put yourself in the place of one of the crowd. What would that mean to you?
 - The words of Jesus, in Luke 12:10, are puzzling to some people. Try to explain what Jesus **was saying** and what he **was not saying**.
 - In Luke 12:11, 12, Jesus paints a picture of His disciples in the midst of severe persecution. What was Jesus saying Christians should expect?
5. In 12:13-21, Jesus tells the story of a rich man who made some selfish choices.
- Why did Jesus tell this story?

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- b. In this paragraph a man made a request of Jesus:
 - (1). What was the request?
 - (2). Was it appropriate to make such a request of a Rabbi?
 - (3). Did Jesus honor the request?
 - (4). What information did the man fail to give Jesus? Why?
 - (5). What did Jesus do for this man?
 - (6). Why was that important?
- c. In 12:16-19, Jesus told a parable about a man who tried to deal with his abundance.
 - (1). In what light does Jesus portray this man?
 - (2). What was Jesus saying about this man?
 - (3). What problem was Jesus pointing out for this man?
- d. In 12:20, Jesus portrays God as calling this rich man a "fool." In view of the warning in Matthew 5:22, how should we understand this statement
- e. In 12:21, Jesus spoke about storing wealth.
 - (1). What **is** Jesus saying in this statement?
 - (2). What is Jesus **not saying** here?
- 6. In Luke 12:22-34, Jesus gives some exhortations which seem strange to some people. Read the paragraph carefully at least three times.
 - a. What was Jesus urging the people to do?
 - b. In this paragraph, Jesus uses two illustrations:
 - (1) What information does Jesus present when speaking of the ravens? How did He apply this information to the crowd?
 - (2) What information does Jesus present when speaking of the field lilies?
 - (3) How did Jesus apply this information to the crowd?
 - (4) At the end of verse 28, Jesus gives a brief description of His hearers.
 - (a) What did He say about them?
 - (b) How does that relate to the rest of the paragraph?
 - (5). What is Jesus **not saying** about the accumulation of possessions?
 - (6) In this paragraph, Jesus draws a contrast between His disciples and the pagan world.
 - (a) What is He saying about each?
 - (b) What message was He conveying to them?
 - (7) In 12:32, Jesus refers to the disciples and/or the crowd as "Little flock."
 - (a) What does He mean by this?
 - (b) Explain the promise Jesus gives to them.
 - (8) Lu 12:23, Jesus gives a serious exhortation.
 - (a) What is it?
 - (b) What does it mean to us, now?
 - (9) Explain the difference between the two kinds of "treasure" described in 12:33, 34.
 - (10) In 12:34, Jesus gives a principle by which people can measure their lives.
 - (a) What is the difference between the "treasure" and the "heart"?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 14

- (b) Restate this principle in your own words so that a person, unfamiliar with the teachings of Jesus could understand it.
7. In 12:35-40, Jesus uses two illustrations.
- What are these illustrations?
 - What do they illustrate?
 - In 12:37, 38, Jesus speaks of the master dressing like a servant and inviting his slaves to lie down at the table so that he could serve them.
 - Would this ever happen?
 - What would Jesus mean by such a statement as this?
 - There is a contrast between the story in 12:36-38 and the scenario in 12:39, 40.
 - What is the contrast?
 - What appears to be Jesus' reason for telling these stories?
8. In 12:41-48, Jesus tells still another story.
- What story did He tell?
 - Why did He tell the story?
 - What was Jesus trying to teach by the use of this story?
 - In 12:42-46, Jesus presents a cause-effect relationship.
 - What is the cause?
 - What is the effect?
 - What was Jesus trying to teach through this means?
 - In verses 47, 48, Jesus describes the basis upon which judgment will be meted out.
 - What criteria does Jesus offer?
 - Write down each piece of information you discover in these two verses.
 - What did you learn from studying this list?
9. In Luke 12:49-53, Jesus talks about the consequences of His coming.
- Read verse 49 several times. Verse 49 has two parts.
 - What does He mean by "I have come to bring fire upon the earth"?
 - What does He mean when He said, "How I wish it were already kindled"?
 - In verses 50, 51, Jesus continues His statement of verse 49.
 - He said, "I have a baptism to undergo." What baptism is this?
 - What emotion do you sense in this verse?
 - There is a strong sense of urgency in 12:50b.
 - What is it?
 - What idea is Jesus trying to convey?
 - In verse 51, Jesus describes a principle of His coming.
 - What is that principle?
 - What does Jesus tell us by the use of this principle?
 - In verses 52, 53, Jesus described some serious relationships.
 - What kind of relationships are these?
 - What did Jesus say about these relationships?

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- (c) How would Jewish people of that era react to such an announcement?
10. In 12:54-56, Jesus drew a contrast between the ability of these people to predict the weather and their ability to interpret present events in their lives.
- a. What is the contrast?
 - b. What was Jesus trying to say through this contrast?
 - c. Why would Jesus call these people "hypocrites"?
 - d. In what ways was Jesus contrast appropriate or inappropriate?
11. In 12:57-59, the final paragraph of the chapter, Jesus gives instructions for disciples who are being taken to court by unbelievers.
- a. What is the relationship between this paragraph and the one which precedes it, 12:54-56?
 - b. What reason does Jesus give for being reconciled with an enemy rather than going into court?
 - c. Why would it make a difference?
12. In what way will you see your daily walk with Christ in a different light because of the study of this chapter?

LESSON 14: – LUKE 12:1-59

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT PERSECUTION

As we see more controversy over the deity of Jesus, the opposition is increasingly severe. In Luke chapter 12 there are 10 paragraphs.

12:1-3	Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees
12:4-7	Do Not Be Afraid
12:8-12	The Spirit Guides Disciples Before Authorities
12:13-21	The Rich Fool
12:22-34	Do Not Be Anxious
12:35-40	Be Watchful for Your Lord
12:41-48	The Faithful and Unfaithful Servants
12:49-53	Jesus Brings Division
12:54-56	Jesus Chides Their Lack of Understanding
12:57-59	Jesus instructs followers To Flee the Courts

12:1-3 - Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees

The chapter begins with the word "meanwhile." Time designations, in this Gospel, are not always precise. One must therefore be cautious about drawing conclusions. It seems safe, however, to assume that Luke is referring to something that happened while He and others were having dinner with the Pharisee.

Luke's description of this event and the content of the paragraph which follows suggests that this experience was called "The feeding of the Five Thousand in other Gospel records. Luke describes it this way:

Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying:..." Luke 12:1a

It was important for Luke to point out that there was a large crowd present. This was no private conversation. Jesus was risking a great deal to warn His disciples against the wiles of the Pharisees. As we have seen elsewhere, that was never a deterrent to Jesus. He told the truth, no matter what the consequences.

Luke gives us no hint as to the location of this experience. If it is the feeding of the 5,000, then it took place in a wide open area on the west bank of the Sea of Galilee. It could not have been in a city or village in Galilee because none of them were large enough to contain that many people in one place. Whatever the location, the crowd was so concentrated that they were stepping on one another.

Jesus began his teaching by first giving instructions to his disciples. Notice the way Jesus spoke:

Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy... Luke 12:1b

"Be on your guard" is really "beware." It comes from the word "prosecho -προσέχω." It means to take heed, to give heed. This word was also used in Hebrews 7:13 to describe the

priest's attendance upon the altar. Jesus was saying, be as alert to this danger as the priests are alert to do their task precisely as God instructed them to do. Jesus was saying that there is great danger from the influence of the Pharisees. The words of Jesus are biting to say the least. He not only paints a picture of danger but graphically describes the nature of this danger. We are not aware of the penetration of the yeast through the whole lump of dough. It is taking place, however, from the moment that yeast comes in touch with the dough. Jesus said that this is precisely what happens with the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. From the moment it comes in contact with people it is busy infiltrating their lives until unwittingly people become as hypocritical as the Pharisees themselves. The word "hypocrite," which means "to answer" identified an actor from the stage. It is one who speaks from behind a large mask. They thought of it as pretense. Jesus was not only saying that the Pharisees were hypocrites, but also that this hypocrisy would permeate the lives of these people if they were not on the alert.

Jesus gives a very subtle warning in the next two verses. He said,

There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the housetops. Luke 12:2, 3

"Proclaimed from the housetop" is significant for two reasons:

1. It was a symbol of ultimate disclosure and a serious contrast to that which is whispered in the ear in one's inner rooms.
2. It was commonly known that one could be heard from a far greater radius if he called out from the roof of his house rather than from the street.

It appeared that the Pharisees were getting away with their deception and destruction, but their lives were not over yet. Jesus was saying that deception would be disclosed; abuses would be punished. Secrecy is one characteristic of evil. Pharisees may seem to be getting away with their secret deception and evil, but there will come a time when the whole world will know. Notice that Jesus used two illustrations to describe how this will take place:

1. Words spoken in darkness will be heard in daylight.
2. Words whispered in inner chambers will be proclaimed from the housetop.

Both illustrations would be well known; both were vivid contrasts. Many things were done in strict secrecy; especially the kinds of hypocrisy practiced by the Pharisees. The trial of Jesus was a case in point. Jesus was saying that they may seem to get away with these things for a time. Ultimately, however, the things they had so carefully kept hidden would be proclaimed to the whole world. Again, the trial of Jesus is known today in more detail than they would have liked.

12:4-7 - Do Not Be Afraid

Jesus called these people "friends." The Greek word for "friends" is "filos" - "φίλος." It means "friend, a dear one, one who is loved." To whom is Jesus speaking when He called them "friends?" As hard as it is for some to understand, Jesus could use this word for each of the thousands who were crowded together listening to Him. He loved every

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one of them. They were all dear to Him. It is my understanding that He was speaking to everyone in the hearing of His voice.

Jesus used a teaching tool of which He was a master and which He used often - arguing from the negative to the positive for purposes of emphasis and contrast. This form of instruction says, in essence, "This is **not** the truth; this is the truth." Notice how Jesus stressed His message:

*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more.
But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing
of the body, has power to throw you into Hell. Luke 12:4, 5*

This is a hard saying for us. We have great fear of anyone who can kill our bodies. It suggests that we have a conviction that death is the worst thing that can happen to us. Our fear of crime in the streets, of nuclear holocaust grow out of this way of thinking.

Jesus was taking a different stand. He was saying that death was not the worst thing that could happen to us. Jesus was not saying that death was an incidental consideration. He knew better. He was saying that there was something infinitely worse than dying.

Notice that Jesus offered three instructions in this brief paragraph. Jesus started with a negative command that shocked His hearers:

*"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do nothing
more." Luke 12:4b*

There are some who believe that Jesus said this because there were some Pharisees who believed that the end justified the means. They were willing to exterminate a person who might get in the way of their "reforms" or their strict keeping of the law. Jesus was saying that this was a grave situation, but certainly not the worst possibility.

Jesus followed this negative command with the first positive command:

*"Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into
hell..." Luke 12:5b*

The word "fear" is "fobos" "φόβος" and is used in two ways:

1. It is used to be afraid, to tremble because of other men.
2. It is also used to describe awe and reverence toward God.

In verses four and five, Jesus uses the term in both ways. Do not be afraid of men, who can kill you, but have reverence for God who has authority to throw you into hell.

This verse cannot refer to Satan because it speaks of one who can throw you into hell. This is a power Satan does not possess. We are reluctant to speak of this as a statement about God. This is because it describes the killing of the body and we do not ascribe this kind of activity to God.

Notice the precise words of Jesus. In the Greek it might be translated in these words,

*Fear the (one who) after the killing authority has to throw (you) into the
gehenna. Luke 12:5b*

The sense of this idea is that when death has occurred, which is inevitable, we should fear the one who then has the power to throw us into hell or gehenna. Only God has that

authority. Jesus was instructing them to fear, to stand in awe of God above everything else.

Did you ever wonder about the word Gehenna? At the southwest corner of the city of Jerusalem there is an area which, though now beautifully covered with grass and shrubs, was once the site where spiritually decadent kings of Judah sacrificed their children to Molech. It was called "Gehenna" - "γεέννα." This is a transliteration of the Hebrew "ge Hinnom." This is the place where the Hinnom and Kidron valleys meet. Because of the diabolical, idolatrous child sacrifices which were done there and because of the fact that it became the garbage dump which smoldered and stunk all the time, it was dubbed the place of burning. Over the centuries it became the symbol of eternal punishment. It is in this sense that Jesus used the term.

Jesus concludes this command with a reaffirmation,

Yes, I tell you, fear him. Luke 12:5c

Again, Jesus used a strong form of repetition to emphasize His message.

Having stated His concern in very strong terms, Jesus continues with two illustrations which explain why He said we should "fear Him" - stand in awe of God. Notice that both illustrations represent extreme, but true concerns. In verse six, Jesus suggests the first illustration:

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet God did not forget one of them. Luke 12:6

Jesus' concern is that there is no creature that God has brought into existence that is beneath His ultimate watchcare. This would be considered an almost ridiculous point, but it is absolutely true. Often Jesus used a point that was almost too obvious to help his hearers understand something that was not obvious at all. That is what is happening here. Sparrows were considered almost worthless. It took five sparrows to be worth two "pennies" - "assaria" - "ἀσάρια." Only the mite was of less value than this small coin. Despite the low esteem in which the sparrow was held, God still was totally aware of every one of them.

For extreme emphasis, Jesus used a second outlandish illustration. He said,

Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Luke 12:7a

Here, Jesus has turned to the use of a hyperbole. A hyperbole is an extreme statement made for purposes of emphasis. There is no doubt that God could count the hairs on the head of every living person. (On some of us that would be a momentary running count.) There was no real purpose for His doing that. The statement, however, is an emphatic way to impress on the minds of the listeners that God is ultimately concerned about every detail of every human life.

Jesus continues with His third instruction:

Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Luke 12:7b

A literal translation of this passage might be as follows:

*Stop, therefore, being afraid; from many sparrows you are different.
Luke 12:7b.*

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This is a very strong command. It is also the last step in a progression of commands.

1. Do not be afraid of men who kill.
2. Stand in awe/reverence of God.
3. Do not be afraid at all.

The word "different," used above, suggests a positive difference. You are different from birds in that you are most valuable while they have almost no value at all. Jesus wants these people to stop being afraid of what His enemies might do to them. This is because when these enemies have killed the disciples, the enemies have done their worst. There is nothing more that they can do. On the other hand, the one who has power over all the universe, God, has a limitless concern for every detail of the lives of these people who serve Him. This is a command of encouragement, not of fear or coercion.

12:8-12 - The Spirit Guides Disciples Standing Before Authorities

Jesus continued to teach this huge crowd of people. In Luke 12:8-10, Jesus used another well known teaching tool. It is a regression from the positive to the startling negative. Notice the steps in Jesus' presentation. He spoke of:

1. Those who confess Christ before men. v. 8
2. Those who deny Christ before men. v. 9
3. Those who speak against Christ. v. 10
4. Those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. v. 10

We need to take a more careful look at each of these four situations.

Verses eight and nine are one-sentence. It is made up of two related cause-effect statements. These statements are a vital part of the regressive picture previously described. Jesus begins with His most positive statement.

I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. Luke 12:8

This is clearly a cause-effect relationship. The cause is clear-cut - those who acknowledge Jesus before others. The word "acknowledges" is not the strongest choice of words. The word Jesus used was "homologeo" - "ὁμολογέω." This is a compound word which literally means "to speak the same." It is one who says the same thing, one who agrees with Jesus. It is one who despite the possibility of persecution confesses that he shares the convictions of Jesus.

The effect is equally clear - "the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God." The word "acknowledge" is the same as in the former part of the sentence - - to speak the same. The Son of man - Jesus - will affirm that person as true to His mission in the world, that he will share the sufferings of Jesus for the cause of the Gospel.

Verse nine begins with the word "but." This suggests that this passage, verse nine, is in direct contrast to the message of verse eight. Notice that verse eight deals with those who speak for Jesus while verse nine deals with those who speak against Him.

Jesus continues, in verse nine, to describe His point concerning allegiance.

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But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God. Luke 12:9

The word "disown" means to deny a person by disowning him/her. The Jewish people would understand this statement quite well. They knew that if a child embarrassed or brought shame on his family, they would disown him. A funeral would be held and the person declared dead. The father would say to the family, "I have no son by that name." It is in this sense that Jesus speaks. If we lead others to believe that we disown Jesus as part of our family because He is a source of shame to us, then we should be aware that He will disown us before the angels in heaven.

Incidentally, verses eight and nine form a royal picture. When a king returned from battle in victorious triumph, a day was set aside to "remember" those who had served him well. The king would "acknowledge" the valiant service of soldiers who took great risks on his behalf; those who made great achievements on the field of battle. When Joseph was able to interpret the dream of Pharaoh, the ruler "remembered"/"acknowledged" Joseph by making him the second in command of the realm.

Verse ten forms the final two steps in the regression which began in verse eight. The language is much stronger in verse ten than it was in verses eight and nine.

And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. Luke 12:10

The scene shifts from the palace to the courts. To speak against a person would be like giving testimony against them. Jesus was describing a person who would speak, as in giving testimony, against Christ. The person might say that Christ is not the Son of God, or that Jesus was not the savior of the world. Jesus was saying that such a person, should he repent, could be forgiven. Note also that it is a universal statement - "everyone."

verse 10b, however, begins with the word "but." This means that there is a serious contrast between the forgiveness which is available for those who are described in verse 10a and the results to those who will be described in 10b.

Jesus spoke in universal, but very final terms in the closing part of verse 10. There is a strong contrast between what a person does when they "**speak a word against Christ**" and when the person would "**blaspheme against the Holy Spirit.**" "Blaspheme" means to speak abusively, speak evil, to revile, to rail against. In a parallel passage in Matthew 12:32, the context is the story of Jesus' healing of the blind man who was demon-possessed. The blasphemy, in Matthew 12:32, was to see the power of God and attribute it to Satanic power. It should be noted that the parallel accounts in Matthew 12 and Mark 3 speak of a different context than is found in Luke 12.

We need to deal with the question of why blasphemy against Jesus can be forgiven, (Matthew 12:32), but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not forgiven. All disobedience to God is, in effect, a word against the Son of Man. Still, God seeks after us. That is an expression of His mercy and grace. He still longs to forgive us. When we attribute the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, we have rejected the Holy Spirit which is the only agent through whom the grace of our Lord is ministered to our fallen beings. It is not that the one crime is so much worse than the other. It is that when we deny Christ, the way of return is still opened. When we reject the ministry of the Holy Spirit, however, we have

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left ourselves with no way of escape, no forum to find redress of our errors before a Holy God.

The scene changes abruptly again in Luke 12:11, 12. This is a picture of the Christian standing before the Sanhedrin. Jesus is not saying that they might be brought there. He is saying that when that happens, and it will, here is how you will respond.

When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say. Luke 12:11, 12

They probably did not hear Him, but Jesus was saying that following Him was a road fraught with persecution. Jesus said, "**when** you are brought..." He did not say, "**if** you are brought..." It was a foredrawn conclusion that they would appear before this tribunal.

Jesus instructed them that they were not to "worry." The Greek text is somewhat more graphic. Jesus said, "Do not be torn apart/drawn in different directions."; Do not be so preoccupied with these concerns that you are torn apart, distracted from the task of bearing witness to your faith. Do not be torn apart by trying to decide how you will defend yourself. Do not be torn apart trying to decide how you will answer their charges against you.

Life was very hectic for these early Christians. They did not have time or assistance to prepare an adequate defense. Jesus was saying that they should not worry about that. The Holy Spirit will do, for them, what they are not able to do for themselves. The Holy Spirit will "teach" you; will give you instruction about what you should say when you stand accused because of your faithfulness in following Jesus Christ.

Notice that Jesus stressed, "at that time." It is not just that the Holy Spirit will teach them how they should respond to the accusations of the Sanhedrin, but also that it would be spontaneous rather than carefully rehearsed in advance. This would serve as further confirmation to the believer that indeed God was ministering to his deep need. This passage is sometimes used to defend the idea that persons preaching should not prepare in advance for their presentation of the Gospel. That would clearly be a misunderstanding of this text.

12:13-21 - The Rich Fool

This paragraph is a parenthesis in Luke's report of Jesus' message. Notice that in the previous paragraph Jesus was talking about the dangers one could encounter because of their faith in Him. At the beginning of the following paragraph, verse 22, the topic is picked up again. Jesus is talking about being free of anxiety about their food or clothing supply. Notice, also, that this paragraph begins with the word "therefore." This suggests that Jesus is drawing a conclusion in His teaching.

It is as though the man who made the petition was unaware of anything that Jesus had been saying. That is quite possibly the case. He apparently was preoccupied with his own agenda and oblivious to what Jesus had been saying. It should be noted that the man was not as out of line making such a request of a Rabbi as we might think. A rabbi was often the proper forum for such a request.

Notice the request that the man made.

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Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Luke 12:13

This was obviously a family quarrel. Jewish law required that unless the eldest son had brought public shame on the family, he would receive a double portion of the inheritance; the other brothers would receive a single portion and the unmarried daughters would receive a dowry. In practice, it would work out in this way. If there were five brothers in the family, the inheritance would be divided into six parts. The eldest son, the heir, would receive two portions and the other four brothers would each receive one of the six portions. If there were daughters in the family, their dowry would be given out of the liquid assets the father had left. These assets were usually as animals or gems. Both were favorite forms of saving ones wealth.

There are several pieces of information that Luke did not record:

1. He did not suggest whether the father of the family had just died or if this had happened sometime before
2. He did not say whether the younger brother had embarrassed and humiliated the family so that he had been disowned by the father.
3. He did not suggest whether the older brother was in fact in default of his legal responsibility.

Notice Jesus' reply to the man:

*Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?"
Luke 12:14*

We need to deal with the question of why Jesus refused to comply with the man's wishes. It was sometimes the function of the priest to mediate such disputes. This man was treating Jesus like any other priest. Had Jesus done as the man asked, He would have confirmed the man's misconception about whom Jesus was. Any Rabbi could mediate this dispute. Not every Rabbi, however, could deal with eternal values as Jesus was busy doing. Jesus was saying, in gentle terms, that He was not just an ordinary Rabbi. He was the Son of God and thus prepared to deal with eternal values.

Jesus did not leave His reply at that. He rather turned it so as to teach the man something the man had not asked of Jesus:

*Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."
Luke 12:15*

Jesus did not concern Himself with the family feud about the inheritance. He did point out the underlying problem that the man was not addressing at all - greed. Jesus was speaking to the man's issue, but He was also dealing with a general problem in every community. People tend to evaluate a life based on what the person has accumulated in terms of power and possessions. Jesus was saying that this was a meaningless set of values. Jesus was also saying that greed was an insidious human quality. Not everyone who seeks to hoard possessions started out to be that way. It is something that can quietly take over one's life without the person being aware of it.

Growing out of this encounter, Jesus told the crowd this parable:

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And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I will do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" Luke 12:16-19

These four verses are filled with "I," "me" and "my." He referred to himself at least eleven times in three verses. The rich man, in Jesus' story, was thinking of no one except himself. The considerations with his overabundant harvest focused upon himself and his comfort. This parable was told in the presence of a people whose culture was crowded with people who were so poor they could hardly find food to eat. In the midst of such abject poverty, the man could think only of his comfort and accumulations. Down through the years the words "eat drink and be merry" have described those who have everything they need and are looking for some way to use the abundance they still possess.

The man in Jesus' story was faced with a dilemma. He had a bumper crop, but he had no place to store his abundance. Notice the focus of Luke 12:18, 19.

Then he said, "This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" Luke 12:18, 19

His focus was entirely upon himself. He thought nothing of the needs of the people who were starving. He had a dilemma that he had to solve in a manner that would produce the greatest accumulation. This is an interesting situation. Jewish teachings of that day required the rich to set aside money so that they could help the needy, especially poor members of their own family. This man appears to have made no provision for such responsibilities. He was in a position to be of assistance to many who were poor. He rather decided to spend even more money to prepare facilities to store even greater accumulations of wealth and provision.

It is not surprising that verse 20 begins with the word "but." This suggests that an intense contrast is about to unfold. The contrast is between what the man said and what God said. The man spoke of ways he could use his abundance to increase his comfort and consumption. God spoke of eternal concerns. In the story that Jesus told, God spoke in these terms:

But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" Luke 12:20

When Jesus said, "You fool," He confused some people. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'you fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." Matthew 5:22c

The words for "fool" in these two passages are different. In Matthew 5:22, the word is "μωρό," which means stupid, sluggish. On the other hand, in the statement in Luke 12:20 the word "fool" is "aphron"! "ἄφρον," which means a lack of spiritual discernment as described repeatedly in Proverbs. God was saying that anyone who would think and act in this manner was totally void of spiritual discernment.

I understand God's reference to "this very night" to be a way of indicating the extent of the divine displeasure with the man's selfish decision. All of this was for the purpose of asking the question, "Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" Jesus was saying to the man, in this question, "You focused on your selfish desires, but the result turned out to be in favor of others and not yourself. Selfish motives did not accomplish your goals. You failed!" Jesus continued:

This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." Luke 12:21

Jesus is speaking of motives. People who focus upon themselves will miss their goal. On the other hand, those who focus their priorities upon God will achieve those goals. Jesus did not say that there couldn't be some temporary gratification of these selfish goals. He was affirming, however, that ultimately these directions would fail.

12:22-34 - Do Not Be Anxious

Jesus now turns to talk with His disciples. He speaks with them in understanding yet careful terms. He said,

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes..." Luke 12:22b, 23

Jesus began the statement with the word "therefore." This reminds us that He is drawing a conclusion. The words "Do not worry..." are a command. It is a very graphic statement. The word "worry" is "merimnao" "μεριμνάω." It means to draw apart in opposite directions. We would translate it, "do not be **torn apart** concerning your life." Jesus then becomes specific. "Do not be torn apart concerning your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear." Jesus was saying that they should not be torn apart by undue concern over the barest essentials for life. This assertion flies in the face of common thinking now as well as then. People are being constantly torn apart over these very things. One may differ with Jesus' position, but He was giving His disciples the divine position concerning these values.

Jesus continued with an explanation of why He had made this statement: "Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes." Again, to the natural man this position seems extreme. We need to understand what Jesus was **not** saying as well as what He was saying. He was **not** saying that a starving man should be oblivious to food. Jesus was saying that food should not be the top priority of our lives. He was not saying that a man who had no cloak to cover himself against the evening chill should be oblivious to the need for covering. He was saying that one who made a fetish of his clothing was missing the mark with his values in life. Jesus is dealing with the aftereffects of the rich fool story on His disciples.

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In the balance of this paragraph Jesus uses two illustrations to drive home His point. His first illustration is that of the raven. Jesus said,

Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them." Luke 12:24

Jesus identified the things people do to prepare food for themselves. They sow; they reap; they store their grain. The raven does none of these. Jesus was not suggesting that they just stand around and wait for God to feed them. He was saying that just as God cared for the needs of the birds, He would also provide for the needs of people. Jesus continued:

And how much more valuable you are than birds! Luke 12:24b

Jesus was arguing from the lesser to the greater. He was saying, "if God would do this for birds, which are very low on the scale of value, think how much more God would do for people, who are the very most important part of all creation.

Having made this point, Jesus then turns to another consideration in the same realm. You will notice that He is still reasoning with them.

Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Luke 12:25, 26

Again, Jesus is arguing from the lesser to the greater. He identified a little thing that they could not accomplish. He went on to say, "if you cannot do this little thing, why are you trying to do even greater things than the ones which are beyond you?" The disciples knew that they did not know how long their lives would last. They were even less able to extend their lives for an hour by worrying - by being torn apart. The disciples knew that Jesus was right. Jesus' final question was devastating, "if you can't extend your life an hour by worrying, what makes you think you can handle yet more difficult tasks by worrying, by being torn apart?" This argument, by itself, was quite convincing, but true to form, Jesus used at least two illustrations - witnesses - to make His point convincing.

Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he cloth you, O ye of little faith!" Luke 12:27, 28

The illustration is different, but the form of the argument is the same. Jesus is again arguing from the lesser to the greater. The comparison of field lilies and the splendor of Solomon is a ridiculous one. That is precisely what Jesus intended. Lilies, naturally, do nothing to make themselves beautiful and care for their lives. In spite of this, they were far more beautiful than the splendor of Solomon whose glory far surpassed that of any king in history. Having established this fact, Jesus then moved to His conclusion. It is couched in an "if--then" clause. Jesus was saying, "IF God so clothes the grass, the gorgeous wild flowers of the field, which are beautiful one day and the next are used to provide heat for cooking, THEN how much more will God provide the clothing that you need because you are far more important to God than any flower?"

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Tucked away at the end of this statement, is a hint concerning what Jesus was teaching. Notice He said, "O ye of little faith!" The reason people are torn apart over their fear they cannot provide clothing for themselves is their lack of faith. The problems inherent in greed are at least twofold:

1. It is a preoccupation with things. This is an expression of pride.
2. It also involves a lack of faith that God will provide what a person needs. This prompts the person to accumulate large amounts of what he needs and wants.

Jesus continues the argument with the word "and."

"and do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well." Luke 12:29-31

This is a difficult statement at best. It was difficult in that day because they were barely able to find enough to eat. It is just as hard today because large portions of the world are starving to death and the whole bent of our culture is not only the provision of enough to keep us alive, but also the amassing of a superabundance to satisfy our wants. Our general obesity is testimony to this priority in our lives. Nevertheless, Jesus gives this command to His disciples.

Jesus went a step farther. He identified our preoccupation with the essentials of life, to the point of absurdity, not as prudent provision, but as pagan in its background. He said, "Do not worry about it." The word for "worry" is "meteoridzo" "μετεωρίδζω" which means "to raise from the ground," "to be in anxious suspense." Jesus gives two reasons why they should not be in anxious suspense about their food:

1. This is the way the pagan world deals with life and we are different.
2. Our Father knows that we need food. His assumption is that when the Father knows that we need food, He provides food.

The next sentence, verse 31, begins with the word "but." This indicates that Jesus will present a strong contrast. He will contrast the grasping after human needs with seeking God's kingdom. Jesus accomplishes this with a promise. His promise is that **IF** we seek God's kingdom, **THEN** God will provide all the physical needs that we seek so diligently. It might slip one's attention, but Jesus was giving a double promise. He was saying that if we will seek God's kingdom, we will have all that this entails as well as the physical needs of life that were our former preoccupation.

In Jesus' address to the disciples we get a glimpse into His heart. He called them "little flock." He was seeing Himself as their shepherd: caring for their needs; keeping them from danger, ministering to their spiritual feeding, loving them in their waywardness, looking after their best interests. He saw them as His flock: helpless and weak. Needing shepherding. They were easy prey needing protection. That is the kind of Lord who watched over them, who watches over us.

We assume that Jesus is still speaking to the disciples, for there is no mention of Jesus speaking to the crowd until verse 54. Jesus said to the disciples:

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Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:32

The encouragement "Do not be afraid" is really a command, "You do not be being frightened." The word for "afraid" or "frightened" is "Phobou" "φοβοῦ" from which we get our English word "phobia." Fear is an interesting though stressful experience. The United States is the best armed country in the world. Nevertheless, the protection these arms offer has not dealt with our national sense of fear. No culture, under any kind of government, has ever lived completely without fear. It is one of the common denominators of human experience. The reason Jesus gave for commanding them not to be afraid was that the Father "was pleased," or it was His good pleasure" to give the kingdom to the disciples. The thing that the Father was doing was designed to be a gift, a blessing to the disciples. It was God's desire, not His requirement.

On the basis of this fact, Jesus again gives the disciples a double command:

1. Sell your possessions.
2. Give to the poor.

The two commands are tied together by the connective "and." This indicates that they are equal and inseparable. One is incomplete without the other. Let me hasten to say that Jesus is not dealing with wealth as an evil thing, but rather as unworthy of our ultimate trust. One way to be certain that wealth does not become our priority is to give it to the poor. This instruction is not the requirement of poverty, but rather a transfer of the saint's allegiance from wealth to God. Rather than requiring poverty, Jesus is simply asking the disciples to trade a temporary, passing kind of wealth for another form of wealth that does not fade or pass away. Notice how He said it:

"Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys." Luke 12:33, 34

Jesus was contrasting a temporal currency with an eternal one. He contrasted the treasures of this earth, which are subject to several forms of danger of being lost or stolen, with an eternal currency which will never be subject to loss or destruction. The currency of the kingdom requires no watchfulness or protection against loss. It is eternally secure.

The very last sentence in this paragraph contains Jesus' reason for making these demands of His disciples.

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Luke 12:34

The word Jesus used for "treasure" was "thesauros" "θησαυρός" which identifies a place of safe keeping. The "heart" identifies our innermost self. It is a way of saying that the thing that identifies our greatest value will also identify that in which we will invest ourselves. On many occasions in history, the church has been weak and shallow. During those times the treasure was somewhere else other than in the kingdom and obedience to God.

12:35-40 - Be Watchful for Your Lord

In this paragraph which stresses watchfulness, Jesus used two different pictures to stress the urgency of being prepared:

1. The master's return from a wedding banquet - Luke 12:35-38
2. Watchfulness lest a thief should come - Luke 12:39, 40

a. The Master's Return from a Wedding Banquet - Luke 12:35-38

This is a simile. Jesus was master of this teaching tool. He took a picture or image that people understood very well and used it to describe a picture that they did not know well at all.

There is a strong sense of urgency in the first sentence of this paragraph. This sentence contains two commands:

1. Be dressed ready for service.
2. keep your lamps burning.

Both commands speak of urgency, preparedness. If you are dressed, time will be saved when the need for service comes. If the lamp is burning, no time will be lost in lighting the lamp. You are ready for service the moment the need arises. This is precisely what Jesus was trying to teach.

In verses 36-38 the picture of the return from a wedding feast is described. Servants did not usually attend such festivities. They stayed at home, but that did not mean that they had nothing to do.

"Like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him." Luke 12:36

Servants were to be busy or at least alert as if the master were present always. The owners of slaves were not accustomed to waiting while the servants were wakened to let the master into his own house. The servants were to be alert to the momentary arrival of the master so that he could be let in without any wait at all. To wait would cause the master displeasure, especially if the hour was late.

Jesus went on to describe the results of such alertness.

"It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night." Luke 12:37, 38

The best Greek text of Luke 12:37a is a bit more specific. It speaks in these terms, "Blessed those servants whom coming the Lord finds watching." The intent of this vivid picture is obvious. Jesus is commending vigilance.

Luke 12:37b begins with the phrase I tell you the truth." In our best Greek text it is the single word "amen" "amhn." It simply means "amen" or "truly."

The picture Jesus paints in 12:37b is a bit difficult for us to comprehend. It would have been even more difficult for His audience to comprehend. Jesus said:

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"...He will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them." Luke 12:37b

As happened in several of Jesus' parables, the intent was not to give a blow by blow account, but to some extent to scandalize the audience and give them an impression that was very important to Jesus' message. That is precisely what was done here. The people had to be stunned to hear Jesus say that a master would put on servant's clothes and serve his servants in the manner that the master was to be treated. They had never known of that ever happening. That is, however, just what Jesus Himself did. He put on the cloak, the body, of a servant and served His servants. He did what every servant was expected to be prepared to do - to give even his life for his master.

In verse 38, Jesus used repetition for strong emphasis. Jesus' intent is evident from the fact that He used the same idea as He had in 12:37a, but the words were more intense.

"It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night." Luke 12:38

Notice that both in verse 37 and 38, where Jesus describes the watchful servants, He says, "Blessed are those servants." Notice also that in verse 37 the word for "watching" is "gregoreo" "γρηγορέω." This word means to watch. In verse 38, however, the word for "watch" is "phulake" "φυλακή" which is a more intense form of the word. This is further stressed by the fact that Jesus described the timing of this watchfulness as "the second or third watch of the night." The Jews divided the night into three watches, but the Romans divided it into four. Eventually the Jews used the Roman divisions for the time of night. We cannot be sure which timing system Jesus was using, but we assume that it was the Roman system. Whichever system it was, Jesus was describing a situation very late at night and seriously stressing the idea of intense watchfulness despite the unlikelihood that one would return at such an unusual hour.

Verse 39 begins with the word "but." This usually suggests that a strong contrast is in progress. The contrast is not between two competing ideas, but rather between two divergent illustrations that Jesus was using. In verses 35 - 38 Jesus had used the illustration of a master returning from a wedding feast. Beginning with verse 39-40 Jesus changed the illustration to a description of the response of a wealthy man to the intrusion of a thief.

b. Watchfulness lest a thief should come - 12:39, 40

The illustration of the thief occupies both verses 39 and 40. Verse 39 tells the story and verse 40 provides the application.

"But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." Luke 12:39, 40

Again, Jesus appeals to a situation the disciples knew very well to illustrate a teaching about the coming of the Son of Man which the disciples did not understand at all. The story of the thief stresses the need for readiness because one does not know when the thief will come. In the same way, Christians should be ready because they also do not know when the Son of Man will come. Luke's account of this story differs strongly from that of

Mark and Matthew. This is neither distressing nor puzzling. Luke is not trying to give a blow-by-blow account of the history of the life of Jesus, but rather trying to convey, with great accuracy, ideas Jesus was teaching about His soon coming.

Verse 40 is clearly an application of the teaching of Jesus concerning the wedding feast and the coming of the thief. It is a simile. He took something well known and used it as a parallel teaching for something they did not know at all. **AS** the servants had to be ready and waiting for their master to return and **AS** the owner of the house had to be alert because he did not know when the thief was coming, **SO** we must be alert and waiting because we do not know when the Son of Man will come again. We only know that He will come when we least expect Him.

12:41-48 - The Faithful and Unfaithful Servants

This paragraph begins with a scenario that was well known to the disciples. Jesus would ask a question of the disciples and Peter would answer without being asked. In this instance a question was not asked, but it arose in the minds of the disciples. Peter asked the question that others were thinking.

*Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?"
Luke 12:41*

As happened so often, the disciples were not clear as to whom Jesus was speaking in the previous parable. Peter clarified the issue by asking Jesus plainly. Notice that Jesus did not answer Peter's question in the simple terms that Peter requested, but He did give an answer.

"The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns." Luke 12:42, 43

Jesus could have answered Peter's question with a single word. He chose to answer Peter's question about a parable by means of a second parable. This parable has to do with another picture that was very familiar to all of the people who listened to Jesus. Everyone knew that when the owner of slaves was out of town he would place his most trusted servant in charge of all the other servants. For all intents and purposes, the trusted servant was acting in the place of the master of all the slaves. Such a person was called the "steward" or "manager." These stewards "oikonomos" "οἰκονόμος," which means "to arrange a house," were either trusted servants or servants who had been granted their freedom and chose to remain in the employee of their former master. This made the steward the most powerful person in the household other than the master.

The disciples, and the rest of the crowd, knew of many examples of stewards who abused the other servants and lived extravagantly while their master was out of town. Jesus uses this common knowledge to remind them that although the master has gone away, he will return and he will be apprised of what has happened in his absence. If the steward has been faithful in the way he has carried out the great responsibility given him by the master, that servant can count on the fact that the master will then place him over the entire household.

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Verses 42-44 are a cause-effect relationship. The cause is doing what the master told him to do. The effect is the benefits that will accrue to the servant who obeys the wishes of the master. Notice how Jesus identifies the results in verse 44:

*"I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions."
Luke 12:44*

This would be a significant promotion for the servant. He had been in charge of all the servants. That was a great honor. Now Jesus was talking about being in charge of everything that the master possesses. This would create a situation in which only the master would be more powerful than that servant. It is the kind of responsibility that Joseph had with Pharaoh, though Joseph was not considered a servant.

Jesus began the next sentence with the word "but." This suggests that a contrast is coming. The contrast is between the results of an obedient servant and one who does not take his responsibilities seriously. The way Jesus told the story is important:

"But suppose the servant says to himself." Luke 12:45a

The word "suppose" suggests that Jesus is telling a story, but one which had no necessary foundation in fact. That would not be unusual with a parable. This was often done by the teachers. Jesus described a tragic scenario.

"But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and womenservants and to eat and drink and get drunk." Luke 12:45

Again, this is a scenario that they had heard of before. It was not at all uncommon. True to form, Jesus took a picture that they knew well and used it to tell them about something that they did not understand at all. Jesus is not really talking about drunken servants. He is talking about people who do not take their responsibilities too seriously because the one to whom they are responsible is not present and may not be for some time. If you have two or more children in your own family, you may have experienced this scenario with them while you were away from the house. For people who have no control over their own lives, a little power is a dangerous thing.

Jesus continued the story with the inevitable consequences:

"The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers." Luke 12:46

One cannot say for sure, but the text does not suggest whether this was a real situation or not. I would suppose that it was not. The picture Jesus was painting was one of surprise. The servant was exercising power he was not accustomed to having. He was in control of the food and wine supply which had not been his prerogative in the past. Because he was not expecting the early return of his master, the servant was taken by surprise. The message is clear. Every servant should be alert and busy because when he does not expect it, the master will return and find him idle and disobedient. This is what the entire passage from 12:35-48 is about. This particular parable was told because of Peter's question about the recipients of this warning. Jesus was saying that it is good advice for every servant to be alert and obedient.

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Notice that the image moves from the domestic realm to the spiritual. Jesus used the domestic picture to give information concerning servants who are not prepared for His coming. Because of this, it is appropriate for Jesus to speak of the judgment of that servant as being assigned to a place with the unbelievers - "apistos" -! "απιστος" - literally without faith. It is translated elsewhere in Luke as "unfaithful." Some are distressed by the statement - "He will cut him to pieces..." It might be better understood if one translates these words "He was cut off..." Certainly the intent of this sentence is to suggest that servants must be watchful and faithful. If they are not, they will be counted as though they were not men of faith at all.

In verses 47-48, Jesus is dealing with the way in which punishment is meted out to those who have been unfaithful and not alert. Jesus does this in two ways. First, He described how punishment will be meted out after a level of responsibility has been determined. Second, Jesus gives broad, general principles for determining the level of responsibility. Notice how Jesus began,

"That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows" Luke 12:47

Jesus begins with the positive side. This servant knows what his master desires, but just does not do what he knows. The verdict is that the servant will be beaten with many blows. Notice that Jesus did not say that the servant would cease being servant to his master, it is just that he will suffer severely for his unfaithfulness and inattentiveness.

Jesus then turned to consider the servant who did not know what his master wanted him to do. Notice that the statement begins with the word "but." That suggests that this will be in contrast with the previous statement.

"But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows." Luke 12:48a

Among the servants of God, there is a wide difference of awareness of what our Lord wants of us. Jesus suggests that this factor will be taken into consideration when our master decides what punishment we should receive. Jesus was saying that ignorance does not release us from responsibility. We will be held responsible. On the other hand, however, our punishment will be tempered by the fact that we did not know. We "will be beaten with few blows."

Jesus now turns to describe this delicate subject in terms of principle. He said it in two ways:

*"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."
Luke 12:48b, c*

This is a beautiful picture of the justice of God. He could have said, you are all responsible, therefore you must all pay the penalty. He did not do this. He rather based His dealings with us on our spiritual progress. If God has given us a great deal, He then feels free to require much from us. The opposite side of this is also true. If God has given us very little, then He will require a commensurate amount from us. We are dealt with on an individual basis dependant upon what God felt it wise to entrust to our care.

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Jesus then said it another way.

"And from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." Luke 12:48c

Privilege is always linked with responsibility. If God entrusts a great deal to our care, it is certain that He will expect a great return from the confidence He placed in us. Again Jesus has found a way to urge them to be very watchful and faithful because an accounting is certain. No matter how long He delays, the master will come and He will hold each of us responsible.

12:49-53 - Jesus Brings Division

For whatever reason, people tend to want to think of the coming of Jesus as a peaceful pleasant thing. Struggle for the Christian seems inappropriate for them. Jesus takes steps to remove that idea from their thinking. If you read this brief paragraph carefully a few times you will notice words which speak of trouble: fire, no peace, and division.

Not only do the words suggest struggle, but the pictures of His own feelings add to that feeling. Notice how He described His own feelings:

"I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!" Luke 12:49, 50

There is passion in these words! This may frighten some because they have difficulty thinking of Jesus in such terms. This is not just an emotional tirade. Jesus is responding to the way His servants have failed to be obedient. There is a justice of God which deals with our failures, but always in mercy. The Old Testament prophets spoke of the judgment that God would bring upon disobedient people, but the prophet ended his message with a ray of hope and forgiveness. In God's covenant with Noah, He promised that He would never again destroy the world by flood, but He did not rule out destruction by fire. Some of our discomfort with Jesus' words comes from our understanding of our own feelings when we say such things. Look at His statement: "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" Fire is used to describe judgment. These words speak to us of intense anger and eagerness to destroy. If you think carefully about how God has dealt with people down through the centuries, however, you can realize that this is more an expression of God's holy justice than an expression of His anger. Because He is just, He cannot allow evil or failure to go unnoticed.

Jesus begins the next sentence with the word "but." Again, this identifies the coming of a contrast. It is a contrast between the task He must perform later and that which He must perform in the near future. Notice what He said:

"But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!" Luke 12:50

We tend to think of the word "baptism" as a means of saying to the world that we have accepted Jesus Christ as savior and Lord. Jesus spoke of "baptism" in two different ways.

1. He spoke of baptism as a sign that one has become a Christian. This is what Jesus spoke of in Mark 16:16, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved..."

2. Jesus also spoke of baptism as a preparation for ministry. He said to John the Baptist, "I have need to be baptized of you..." It was a way of signifying the beginning of His priestly ministry just as a priest of the temple had to go through "baptisms," washings, before he was prepared to serve at the altar.

Jesus was saying that He had ministry that He had to perform and He would be uneasy until He had performed the ministry of redemption that was expected of Him by the Father.

Luke 12:51-53 is very difficult for some people because of the image it brings to their minds. Look at what Jesus said in Luke 12:51:

"Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division." Luke 12:51

Jesus was not relishing the disturbance His coming had precipitated. He was simply trying to deal honestly with the results of His coming. Who among us would not want faithfulness to the teachings of Jesus to result in a life of uninterrupted peace, pleasure and good will? Jesus was simply trying to be honest about the results of His coming.

He continued with illustrations of what this division would look like. He said,

"From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three." Luke 12:52

Did you ever wonder why Jesus did not say two against two? There may be several reasons, but one among them is the fact that repeatedly the godly are identified as the minority. We may be in the minority, but we are still expected to stand. This kind of teaching deals a death blow to the idea of uninterrupted peace and good will.

Jesus continued by speaking a bit more specifically. He said:

"They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." Luke 12:53

This would have been most difficult for these people to hear. They had been taught that absolutely nothing could come between members of the family. They were to stand together no matter what might happen. Jesus was saying that the feelings would be so strong that individual members of a family would publicly stand against each other; faith would become so important that these disciples would be willing to set aside even their family relationships, as strong and important as they were, to be faithful to God in Jesus Christ. This has been true in many areas of the Christian world where it was costly to take a stand for Christ.

12:54-56 - Jesus Chides Their Lack of Understanding

In this paragraph, Luke tells us that Jesus is speaking specifically to the crowd. The words are strong and not difficult to understand. Jesus returns to one of His favorite teaching tools. He reminds them of something that they know very well. From this comfortable point He then turns their attention to areas with which they are not nearly as familiar.

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT PERSECUTION

He said to the crowd: "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'It's going to rain,' and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It's going to be hot,' and it is." Luke 12:54, 55

In every part of the world there are generalizations by which people feel they can decide what the weather is going to be. Sometimes, these generalizations are more accurate than some more sophisticated modern instruments for weather prediction. Jesus described two of these generalizations by which the people of that area anticipated the coming weather conditions. He was saying that these generalizations prove to be right most of the time.

Having described something with which they were quite familiar, He now turned to an area of life with which they were not as familiar. His words were strong, but true.

"Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?" Luke 12:56

These people knew the general signs concerning the weather because they bothered watching and keep track to see if their assumptions about the weather conditions were true. Jesus was saying that they were more interested in the weather than they were in their spiritual condition. Why would He call them "hypocrites?" The word for "hypocrite" is "hupocritas" "υποκριτης". Originally it designated one who answers. It then took on the form of stage acting because the actors acted and said things that did not represent their own life and speech; because they spoke through masks which tended to enhance their voices so that everyone in the arena could hear them. Eventually this became a word used to describe one who uses a false appearance to hide his opinions, disposition and attitudes. It was to pretend to be something that they were not. In other words, Jesus was saying that if they were sharp enough to be able to tell what the weather was going to be, then why were they unable to demonstrate the same keenness in spiritual things?

12:57-59 - Jesus Instructs His Followers To Flee the Courts

In this very brief paragraph, Jesus is giving them a concrete illustration of what He was talking about. In that day as in this, there were those who were busy taking people to court in an attempt to get the better of them. This paragraph is an outgrowth of the previous short paragraph. Jesus had been talking about their excellent experience in predicting the weather, but their unfortunate experience in being able to deal with spiritual issues and find solutions for their own troubles without the aid of the court.

"Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right? As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled to him on the way, or he may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny." Luke 12:57-59

Against the background of His teaching about predicting the weather, Jesus draws a contrast. It is as though He were saying, "How is it you can tell what the weather will be, but do not seem to be able to find a way to solve your problems with a person bent on taking you to court?"

Jesus then describes some of the hard realities of life in court. If you do not strive to find a solution on your own, it is entirely possible that the judge will give instructions for

the officer of the court to place you in prison. Some have felt that Jesus said this because His enemies were beginning to make trouble for His followers. The text would be quite clear if so. We do not know for certain, but it seems plausible.

Conclusion

There are two interwoven strains in this chapter. Jesus speaks at length about persecution. He also speaks at length about the need to be alert and obedient. In doing so, He perfectly described the times in which they lived. They did face opposition from those who did not believe that Jesus was the Christ. They also faced the possibility of being lulled to sleep by the fact that God did not act immediately.

They were being called to alert obedience on two fronts. They must be strong to stand against the persecution by those who did not believe that Jesus was the Christ. They must be strong to be alert and obedient even when it appears that there is no immediacy to the coming of their Messiah.

Today we face a similar dilemma. There are many people who disagree with our faith and are willing to make life difficult for those of us who stand true to our faith in Christ. The intensity of this opposition is growing as quickly as the number of people who oppose us. Simultaneously it takes constant vigilance to remind ourselves that Jesus is coming soon and we need to be alert and ready for His return.

Look at your own life. Are you watching, waiting, expecting the Lord to come momentarily to claim His own? Are you bending every effort to be absolutely faithful to do all that God expects of you whether or not it is easy; whether it meets with our own idea of how life ought to be lived? It is at this point that the admonition of Jesus, "Do not worry about your life..." takes on a beautiful credibility for our lives every day.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 15

LUKE 13:1-35

JESUS TEACHES PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

1. In our best Greek manuscripts there are six paragraphs in Luke 13. On the chart below, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

13:1-5	
13:6-9	
13:10-17	
13:18-21	
13:22-30	
13:31-35	

2. In Luke 13:15, Jesus deals with two recent tragedies.
- When asked about these tragic events, how did Jesus respond?
 - Upon what did Jesus focus His attention when these events were mentioned?
3. In 13:6-9, Jesus told a parable about a fig tree.
- What relationship, if any, exists between this parable and the discussion in 13:1-5?
 - What single message is Jesus teaching in this parable?
4. Luke 13:10-17 tells the story of Jesus again healing on the Sabbath.
- Why would Jesus heal on the Sabbath when He knew that it stirred up the Pharisees so much?
 - Who initiated this healing, Jesus or the crippled woman?
 - To what does Jesus appeal as He explains His apparent violation of the Sabbath rules? What difference would that make?
 - Study the woman's response (13:13) when she discovered that she was healed.
 - What did she say?
 - What did it mean?
 - Why is it important?
 - Study Jesus' response to the religious leaders in 13:15, 16.
 - Think about these words of Jesus - The Lord answered him, you hypocrites.
 - What did you notice?
 - What does it mean to you?
5. In Luke 13:18-21, Jesus tells two very potent parables.
- What is the relationship between these parables and the Sabbath healing in 13:10-17?
 - Write down the information in the first parable.

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1. What was Jesus talking about?
2. What single message was He seeking to convey in this parable?
- c. Write down the information Jesus gave in the second parable.
 1. What was Jesus talking about?
 2. What single message was He seeking to convey in this parable?
- d. How do the two parables relate to each other?
- e. What do these parables say about the context in which they are placed?
6. In Luke 13:22-30, Jesus talks about entering through the narrow door.
 - a. What prompted Jesus to present this teaching?
 - b. Make a list of the facts Jesus included in the story He told in this paragraph.
 - c. What do these facts say about the question?
 - d. What question was asked of Jesus?
 - e. What question did Jesus answer?
 - f. Why would this story be important to the Jewish people?
 - g. Why would the host bar the door against his guests?
 - h. Who might Jesus be referring to as the guests in this story?
 - i. What difference would it make if these rejected guests (13:26) had eaten with the host and he had taught in their streets?
 - j. Who might the people be who came from the east, west, north and south?
 - k. What is the single message Jesus sought to teach in this story?
7. In the brief paragraph, 13:31-35, Jesus sorrows over Jerusalem.
 - a. What prompted this emotional outburst?
 - b. In 13:32,33, Jesus speaks of Herod.
 1. Why would Jesus speak of Herod in these terms?
 2. What does this outburst say about Jesus?
 - c. Look at what Jesus said about His plans in this paragraph:
 1. Why would He speak so forcefully?
 2. What was the goal of which Jesus speaks in 13:32?
 - d. 13:33 appears to be somewhat of a satire. Why would Jesus speak in this manner?
 - e. Put yourself in Jesus' shoes as you read 13:34.
 1. How would you feel?
 2. What would you be trying to say in these words?
 - f. Jesus uses the simile of a hen and her chicks in 13:34.
 1. What did He say about them?
 2. What message was He trying to convey?
 3. What pronouncement grows out of this simile?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 15

- g. To what does Jesus refer when he spoke of "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord?"
- 8. Take this chapter and apply it to your life and your community.
 - a. What does it say to you and your culture?
 - b. What impact does Jesus want this chapter to have on the way you live your life?

LESSON 15: – LUKE 13:1-35

JESUS TEACHES PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

Introduction

In our best Greek manuscripts, there are six paragraphs in Luke chapter 13. They are as follows:

13:1-5	The Danger of Destruction
13:6-9	The Barren Fig Tree
13:10-17	Jesus Healed a Crippled Woman on the Sabbath
13:18-21	The Mustard Seed and the Leaven
13:22-30	Enter by the Narrow Door
13:31-35	Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem

13:1-5 - The Danger of Destruction

The Galileans were prone to insurrection. It is not surprising that when they discussed the idea that the Messiah would come from Nazareth, someone used a common proverb: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" We know that Pilate had alienated himself from Herod and it continued until Pilate sent Jesus to Herod.

There are two tragedies in this paragraph:

1. The murder of Galileans in the act of making sacrifice at the Jerusalem temple. - 13:2, 3
2. A tower, at Siloam, fell on several workers - 13:4, 5

Many think that the problem which caused the insurrection was Pilate's decision to use temple tax to pay for a new water supply, perhaps an aqueduct. The Galileans would see this as a sacrilege and refuse to have anything to do with the project or pay the tax. It is altogether possible that Pilate retaliated against their rebellion. Some suggest that Pilate had Roman soldiers (probably Samaritans) mingle with the crowd and then on signal beat them. It is possible that some of them were carried away with this punishment and several Jews died.

There are a number who believe that several Jews had become involved in the water project which was using Temple tax money. The Jews would understand the falling of the tower as the judgment of God on the sins of the victims. This was the contention of the three friends who talked with Job about his difficulties.

Luke tells us that some people informed Jesus about these two tragedies.

Now there was some present then who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Luke 13:1

The suggestion is that Jesus had not been present and had to be told of the tragic events. Whatever the situation, evidently the people held Pilate responsible for what had happened. It is also clear that they bought the idea that the righteous prosper and the sinful suffer. Jesus took exception to that position:

Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you No! But unless you repent, you too will all perish Or those eighteen who died when the tower of Siloam fell on them - do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will perish." Luke 13:2-5

In these four verses, Jesus tied two catastrophes together. Jesus was dealing with an ancient Jewish mindset - Evil is punished; good is rewarded. The fact that the Galileans were murdered would cause other Galileans to believe that they had done something wrong. Jesus, in these verses, is attempting to give these people a different perspective. These men were no different from any other Galilean. That would be hard for these Jewish people to hear.

Jesus immediately changed the focus. He did this by directing their attention to themselves. Unless they changed their ways, they too would perish. This was because the Galileans were known for their rebellious attitudes toward Rome. Jesus was saying that if they continued their confrontational ways, they would also receive the wrath of the Roman authorities.

In verses four and five, Jesus directs their attention to the other catastrophe - the men killed when a tower fell on them. Again, He found it necessary to deal with the ancient Jewish idea of guilt - Evil is punished; good is rewarded. If bad things happened, that was proof that they had done wrong. Jesus was saying that these men were no worse than anyone else living in Jerusalem. He followed the same pattern. He turned their attention from the catastrophe toward themselves. Unless they changed their ways, they would as surely perish as the men killed by the falling tower.

13:6-9 - The Barren Fig Tree

The fact that this parable immediately follows the discussion of the two tragedies, and the Jewish understanding of why that happens, suggests that Jesus may have told this parable to shed light on the issues discussed in that paragraph.

First, we must remember that it is a parable. The events of the story probably did not happen at all. It is a story told to convey a specific truth. As we have said before, a parable is often used to scandalize or shock the hearer. This story would certainly shock those who listened to Jesus. Everyone knew that it took three years before a fig tree would bear fruit. At the end of that time, however, they would expect to find fruit. The fact that the owner came looking for fruit every year would make the listeners wonder what was wrong with the man. It would have been an even greater shock if the vineyard keeper had said these things.

There is a single truth that Jesus was trying to convey. The owner was looking for fruit. It is a way of saying that God is looking for spiritual fruit in our lives. The cost of fruitlessness is judgment - to be cut down. The intervention by the vinedresser could be a parallel of the ministry of Jesus to save the fruitless from judgment. In the end, however, the edict still stood - fruitlessness brings judgment. This is a picture of a second chance, but it also contains the sign of judgment, should the second chance be rejected.

13:10-17 - Jesus Healed a Crippled Woman on the Sabbath

Notice the timing that Luke suggests - "On a Sabbath . . ." He makes no effort to be chronological. It may have been before the previous paragraph or it may have come later. It was not an important consideration for the purposes of this Gospel record. Notice that the location of this experience is no more specific than the timing. Luke said:

*On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in **one of the synagogues**,...Luke 13:10*

In Jesus' last participation in a Synagogue, in this Gospel, Jesus finds himself again struggling with the idea of healing on the Sabbath. Luke is giving a series of events, not a chronological statement. It is not less dependable, but simply has a different purpose to accomplish.

Verses ten and eleven describe the condition of the woman. Notice what Luke tells us about this person:

1. She was a woman.
2. She was in the synagogue.
3. She was crippled - "astheneia" - "ἀσθένεια" infirm.
4. She had been infirm for 18 years.
5. The infirmity was caused by a spirit.
6. She was bent over and unable to straighten up.

This list gives us some insights into the life of this person. In that culture, the life of a woman centered around the rearing of children. It would be almost impossible for this woman to bear or care for children. Unless she was very old, this would be considered reasonable grounds for divorce by many.

She was in the synagogue. Women were not forbidden in the synagogue, but it was much more important for men to participate there than for women. Her presence identifies her as an unusual person.

She was infirm. This word "infirm" means to be without strength. It is the inability to perform certain normal functions, such as standing erect. Vine points out something very important:

"In Luke 13:11 the phrase 'a spirit of infirmity' attributes her curvature directly to Satanic agency. The connected phraseology is indicative of trained medical knowledge on the part of the writer." ¹

This is the kind of insight one might expect from one trained in medical science. Luke meets that criteria.

She had been infirm for eighteen years. This carried a significance for them which might elude us. Unless this woman was quite old, which we cannot determine one way or another, it would mean that she could not bear or care for children. This would be very important to people in that culture, since this was the primary focus for a woman there.

¹ John R. Kohlenberger III, Editor, *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984) p. 587

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A spirit caused this woman's infirmity. It is reasonable to interpret this to mean that the "spirit," as mentioned in this text, is a reference to demon possession. Jesus was dealing with the problem of demon possession in this instance.

The woman was bent over and unable to stand straight. You will remember that the definition of this affliction was that the person was unable to perform some necessary function. This woman was incapable of standing straight or even standing straight with assistance.

Verses 12 and 13 describe what Jesus did so as to help this woman. The first thing to be observed is that Jesus took the initiative. He did not act because the woman came seeking help, but because he saw a need and moved to meet it.

When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." Luke 13:12

This is not surprising in view of the way God takes the initiative in meeting human needs. God seeks out rebellious human beings to forgive them. God also seeks out needy people in order to heal their diseases and brokenness. Jesus' words to this woman carry an important piece of information. He said to her, "you are set free from your infirmity." He was describing her condition as a form of bondage. Jesus was also saying that the power of God could terminate this bondage. In the eyes of Jesus, though this woman was considered unimportant by the people of her culture, He saw her as ultimately important and had a desire to bring release to her bondage. That is what God, in Jesus Christ, is like.

Luke continued by telling us that Jesus did something that would shock those who listened to Him.

Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. Luke 13:13

Though there were many people who did not take the moral code seriously, this was a culture with a high respect for purity. Part of this understanding was that a man would never touch a woman who was not his wife. Jesus cared about this woman who because of her infirmity would experience rejection and neglect by many people she encountered. This was, in part, because people believed that God punished such a person for their flagrant sins. Jesus was not worried about becoming unclean. He was concerned to meet human need and ending the kind of ostracism she had experienced for so long.

Notice the woman's evaluation of what happened to her.

...and immediately she straightened up and praised God. Luke 13:13b

She was completely healed and she knew it. She was also keenly aware of the fact that it was God who had intervened in her time of need and healed her infirmity. The act of saying this, however, has other implications. Jesus performed the miracle, but she praised God. The implication is that Jesus is also God. This fact would not have been lost upon those who also came to see what Jesus would do.

Verses 14 and 15 deal with the response of the religious community to the miracle Jesus did on the Sabbath. Notice what the ruler of the synagogue said to the people, not to Jesus:

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Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath." Luke 13:14

Remember, that in his indignation, the ruler of the synagogue did not speak to Jesus, but spoke to the people who stood nearby. His tone is judgmental. His statement seems to suggest that the laws written by Rabbi's were more important than the people for whom the ten commandments were written.

Jesus did not argue about whether it was the Sabbath or not. It appears that He could just as easily have invited the woman to return the next day and healed her without confrontation with the Pharisees. That did not happen because Jesus was bent on making a point with the people who had come to listen. God did instruct Israel to keep the Sabbath, but God also instructed Israel to love their neighbor as themselves. This love was not evident in the ruler of the synagogue. There is a basic difference between Jesus' understanding of the law of the Sabbath and that of the ruler of the synagogue.

Notice the way Jesus answered this indignant religious leader.

The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" Luke 13:15, 16

Notice how it is reported:

The Lord answered him,(singular) you hypocrites (plural) . . . " Luke 13:15a

This is not an instance of poor grammar. Jesus properly addressed the man, but it appears that there were several Pharisees present at the time.

This is one of the few instances where Jesus does not point His accusers to the Law. He rather points to their own lifestyle. Many of these people would have animals. They dealt with the comfort of their animals on the Sabbath without any conscience problem. They were unable to understand doing the same thing for a person whom God has given a place of special privilege. Jesus was charging them with being inconsistent. We do not know if they recognized it, but Jesus was shaming them. He mentioned the fact that they would work on the Sabbath to alleviate one day of discomfort for their animals, but they would not do the same for a Jewish lady who had suffered unbelievable agony for eighteen years.

As happens so often in Luke's Gospel, he shows how the crowds responded to the battle between Jesus and the religious community.

When he had said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing. Luke 13:17

We cannot say for certain, but it appears that the religious leaders realized that their position had brought them humiliation; it showed just how ridiculous their position was. That is the natural result of placing man made laws ahead of God's design for the lives of those who serve Him.

A second result was the fact that the common people also responded to what Jesus had said. Luke expresses it this way:

When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing. Luke 13:17

Notice that Luke did not say that the people delighted that Jesus had humiliated the Pharisees. They delighted in the wonderful things that Jesus was doing. This is important. Those who considered Jesus their enemy were sometimes humiliated in their encounters with Him. It was not that He sought a way to humiliate them. They brought humiliation on themselves by the positions they took and the attacks they made on Him. Nevertheless, Jesus took a strong stand against their illogical stance in this instance.

13:18-21 - The Mustard Seed and the Leaven

There are two very different parables in this brief paragraph. Both the mustard seed and the leaven were very well known and the people would have understood exactly what Jesus was saying. In both instances, Jesus suggested that he was using these parables to help people understand something that was not well known, the kingdom of God. We, therefore, must attempt to discover what He was saying about the mustard seed and leaven in order to discover what He was saying about the Kingdom of God. Matthew speaks of the Kingdom of heaven while Luke, along with Mark, speak of the Kingdom of God. We understand the Kingdom of God to be a very inclusive term and deals with all that God created, both in heaven and in earth. Jesus was saying that the kingdom was like a mustard seed.

An overview of what Jesus said about the mustard seed will suggest what Jesus was saying about the kingdom of God. About the mustard seed, Jesus gave this information:

1. A man planted it in a garden.
2. The mustard seed grew and became a great tree, This means that it changed significantly and everyone would know it.
3. The birds perched in the tree. This refers to the fact that the kingdom was strong enough to be of great benefit to the needs of others.

The point that Jesus was making was that the kingdom of God, like a mustard seed, would grow substantially and become a great benefit to those around it. God planted His kingdom in the world to minister to the needs of people in their weakness.

The parable of the leaven speaks to the same issue, the kingdom of God. Unlike the parable of the mustard seed, the parable of leaven offers just one statement of similarity. Jesus said that a woman mixed a little leaven in a large amount of flour. The important thing about this scenario is that the little leaven would have a changing effect upon the whole batch of flour.

The similarity between the leaven and the kingdom of God is obvious. Just as the little leaven changes the nature of the whole batch of flour, so the kingdom of God, small as it is, has a changing effect upon the whole world.

It is one thing to ask what the two parables mean. It is quite another to explore what this has to do with the context which we were studying. If you look closely, you will

notice that the two parables fit carefully into the context of the healing on the Sabbath which immediately preceded the parables.

In Luke 13:10-17, there was a woman who needed to be healed and a group of Pharisees who needed to be changed. As the branches of the mustard tree offered strength and support to the birds, Jesus brought healing to the woman who had been crippled for 18 years. As the leaven changed the whole half bushel of flour, so Jesus sought to change the thinking and allegiance of the Pharisees. They should have been excited about His ministry, but were only frustrated by it. In these two parables and the situation which prompted them, Jesus offers a picture, a model of what the kingdom of God ought to be. That is exciting.

13:22-30 - Enter by the Narrow Door

In the beginning of this paragraph, Luke tells us that Jesus is going through the towns and villages teaching as He goes to Jerusalem. This is the beginning of the final trek to Jerusalem. The timing in Luke, again, is not specific. Somewhere along the road to Jerusalem, someone asked Jesus a question. Luke describes it in these terms:

Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"
Luke 13:23

The question that the man asked dealt with the number of people who would be saved. Jesus did not answer that question. As happened so often, Jesus had to redirect the questions that were asked. Jesus was asked the question, "how many?" He responded by answering the question, "Who will be saved?" This is the way Jesus said it:

He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to . . . " Luke 13:23b-24

We can only assume that the person who asked this question was a Jew. It must have been a shock for him to hear Jesus say that he should make every effort/strive to enter through the narrow door. Jewish people felt that because they were Jews they were assured of the heavenly banquet with the prophets and with the Messiah. Really, Jesus' words were much more graphic than our translation of Luke's quotation. Jesus really said, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate." The word "strive" is literally "agonidzo" - "ἀγωνίζω." This term is used in both the military and athletic communities. It means to strive to the point of absolute pain. It is to put forth every effort to enter the kingdom, to hold nothing back in the attempt to be a part of the kingdom. It is not a striving to earn one's salvation, but a striving to be faithful so that this blessing can be ours. The fact that Jesus used this term suggests that entering in because one belongs to a certain national group or participates in certain religious practices is not assured. It is not automatic. If everyone is guaranteed entrance, then the instruction to "agonize" does not make sense. It is precisely because Jesus was saying that not only was their entrance uncertain, that it was appropriate for Him to instruct them to agonize to enter.

Jesus clearly says that there will be many, who really want to enter the feast and are unable to do so. This would be a shock. Jewish people could imagine neither a Jew who did not want to enter the kingdom nor one who would be denied entrance.

Jesus then turned to a cultural picture that everyone listening would understand.

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Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' Luke 13:25

This is a story. It probably did not happen, but was used to explain what Jesus was trying to say to this man. This is the picture of a great feast. The owner of the home is the host of the feast. The guests were invited and told the time of the feast. At the appointed time, the host of the feast would secure the door and no one else could enter no matter what the situation. It would be a tragic error to be absent and just as unfortunate to be late for the feast. It would cost one not only the admission to the feast, but also the relationship with the host that prompted him to invite the person in the first place. Being saved; being invited into the kingdom was something that one should be very alert to care for. It would not be uncommon for an invited guest who had been delayed to plead to be allowed to enter. It would be just as common that the door would remain unopened. The word "sir" is literally "kurie" - "κύριε" which means "Lord." This was a way of saying that the host was the master, the controller of the feast. There is a certain picture of helplessness in the portrayal of the person standing outside knocking and begging to be admitted, only to be refused. This is carefully tied to the idea of who will be saved.

Jesus continued with the story by which He illustrated His position:

But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'
Luke 13:25b

The Jews had at least three ways to identify a person:

1. They were identified by name.
2. They were identified by their father. Peter was known as "Simon bar Jona" - Simon son of Jona.
3. They were identified by the location of their home. Jesus was called "Jesus of Nazareth."

To say "I don't know you or where you come from" is an expression of total rejection.

Jesus continued:

Then you will say, "We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets." Luke 13:26

Jesus had said that He did not know them. They, therefore, attempted to identify themselves. In effect they were saying, "Don't you remember us? We ate and drank with you." Eating and drinking with a person was an announcement to that person and to others that you accept them. To claim that they had eaten with Him was a claim that He had accepted them.

Did they realize what they had said? They said to Jesus,

"You taught in our streets." Luke 13:26b

Teachers did not teach in the streets by choice. The preferred place to teach was in the synagogue. Failing to gain permission to teach in the synagogue, they would teach wherever they could. We know that toward the end of His Galilean ministry, Jesus taught only in the open air and never in the synagogue. For them to say that He had taught in

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their streets was an unwitting confession that they as a community had turned Him out of their synagogue.

Jesus' response to their last-ditch effort to gain recognition was as clearly understood as it was direct. He said, speaking as the master of the feast,

But he will reply, "I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!" Luke 13:27

In that culture, repetition was a way to suggest strong emphasis. Jesus repeated His statement word for word: "I don't know you or where you come from." The word "know" - "οἶδα - oida" describes perfect knowledge of something or someone. It is exactly the same word that is used in the Septuagint, A Greek version of the Old Testament, in Exodus, where the author said, "

*There arose a Pharaoh who **KNEW** not Joseph." Exodus 1:8*

Jesus' statement carried political overtones. People who were "known" by the king were safe and prosperous. Those who were not "known" by the king would be in danger and face certain suffering.

He also added to this emphasis, the strong words, "Away from me, all you evildoers." Jesus not only denied knowing them, but maintaining the image of a king, Jesus sent them from His presence - certain doom for anyone ejected from a king's presence.

Jesus continued with His story in these words:

There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. Luke 13:28

As we said earlier, Jewish people believed that they would attend a great feast presented by the Messiah. These Jewish people would be seated with the prophets and the great leaders of their people. It had to be a tremendous shock to these people to hear Jesus say that they would be watching as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the prophets at the feast and they would be expelled. They would consider this as insulting as having someone say that they were not Jewish. The clear message Jesus is presenting to them is that some of them will not be present.

The picture of anguish that Jesus painted was meaningful to these people. Rabbis taught that when the Jewish people were included in the eternal feast with the Messiah, the rejection and condemnation of the Gentiles would cause great weeping and "gnashing of teeth." Jesus has turned that around and portrays the Jewish people in that same situation.

He was not finished.

People will come from the east and west, north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Luke 13:29

As if it was not enough for Jesus to say that these Jews would not be included in that eternal feast, He had an even more painful message. People from the "east and west, north and south" is another way to refer to gentile people from all over the globe. Put yourself into the shoes of these Jewish people. You think that you are the favored people of God. Then Jesus tells you that Gentiles from all over the world will be included in the great feast

with the prophets and the great people of Israel, but you will be excluded. Their rage had to be almost beyond comprehension.

Jesus summarized the story in a simple sentence.

Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last." Luke 13:30

Jewish people had been happy to remind the lowly Gentiles that Jews would be honored before God in the presence of the Messiah. Of the Gentiles who thought about this, most would think that they did not have a chance. Jesus is saying, in this announcement, that people who never thought that they had a chance to be included will be the first, the honored guests. Those who were certain that they were to be included would be last; they will be excluded in the same manner that they thought the Gentiles would be.

13:31-35 - Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem

This is one of the more unusual places where Luke is quite specific about the time line of his record of the life of Jesus.

Then some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you" Luke 13:31

It was some Pharisees who were intervening to get Jesus to go somewhere else for His own safety. Were these Pharisees followers of Jesus? The text does not say, but it appears that they were. They urged Jesus to go somewhere else. The purported reason for their request was that Herod wanted to kill Jesus. This is highly possible. Herod Antipas was a man who was quite capable of such action. It is also possible that the Pharisees wanted to get Jesus out of town. My own preference is that they were sympathetic with Jesus and His mission.

Jesus' reply was direct and forceful. These are some of Jesus' strongest words found anywhere in the Gospels.

He replied, "Go tell that fox, I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal. In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day - for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!" Luke 13:32, 33

These are strong words indeed. Jesus was not engaged in name-calling. He rather was identifying the man. A fox was known, in Israel, as the slyest of animals. It was also known for its great potential for destruction and uselessness. This is a glimpse into the mind of Jesus. Certainly He knew how dangerous it was for a person to refer to a king, like Antipas, as a fox. It took the kind of courage that Jesus possessed.

A lesser man would have found a way to go graciously somewhere else and preach. Jesus showed what kind of person He was by His response. Faced with danger, Jesus was determined to continue ministering to the needs of people. He not only declared that he was going to continue helping, but gave a timetable for His actions. Jesus would not be deterred by the potential danger that others posed for Him.

Notice the timing Jesus mentions.

I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal. Luke 13:32

JESUS TEACHES PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

Some suggest that Jesus said this, in this manner, because He was about a three-day walk from Jerusalem. It is possible, but we cannot be sure. The emphasis is not on the time, but on the fact that He was going to continue to minister to the needs of people despite the fact that Herod Antipas was seeking an opportunity to destroy Him. Much attention has been placed on the statement Jesus made about the third day - "I will reach my goal." It appears that Jesus used this phrase in several ways. One of His goals was to go to Jerusalem. He could have been saying that He was going to Jerusalem and he was about three days away from that goal. Again, He could have been saying that His entire purpose was to go to Jerusalem to die for the sins of the people. Even His attitude in this instance was part of that determination. Certainly being the sacrifice was part of His goal. Another possibility of His "goal" was that he was going to Jerusalem. When He went into the city, in the triumphal entry, He went as a king, not to the palace, but to the temple. The temple was to the kingship of Jesus what the throne room was to other kings. The temple was the symbol of both the forgiveness of sins in the sacrifices, but also of the holy presence of God in the Holy of Holies - a place of fellowship between God and His people.

Verse 33 is a parallel to verse 32. In good Jewish style, Luke adds emphasis by repetition. As happens in almost all instances of emphatic repetition, there is additional information included with the repetition. It is true here as well. Jesus indulges in some very graphic satire. Could Jesus have been involved in satire? Remember that satire is a literary statement intended to expose vices and abuses through ridicule or irony. The acceptability of satire rests upon its motive. If it is used to destroy, it is not Christlike. If, on the other hand, it is used to expose evil, then it is a tool which He often used. Clearly there were prophets killed in places other than Jerusalem. This tongue-in-cheek humorous form, however, enabled Jesus to attack the atrocities of the religious leaders of this city without being abusive.

The second part of this paragraph grows out of the first. Having mentioned the killing of the prophets in Jerusalem, Jesus now dealt with that issue.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who killed the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" Luke 13:34

Jesus said, "How often I have longed to gather your children . . . " When did He do that? Had He been there many times before that the Gospel records do not record? What is the background of this emotional statement? We know that it was Jesus' custom to attend the mandatory feasts in Jerusalem as if He were a resident who lived within 15 miles of the city. Though the Gospel records do not tell us, it appears that Jesus had been there often. and had preached to the people often, but His message was not received.

This is the cry of pain that Jesus felt for the people of this great city. It had become known for its murder of prophets rather than the holy place where God shared with His people. This was a stinging attack. Jerusalem was the place, out of all Israel, which God had chosen to place His name. This was the place where God deigned to express His presence in visible form in the Holy of Holies for the comfort and instruction of His people, Israel. It had become the place where His prophets, those whom He sent to instruct His people in the way of righteousness, were repeatedly put to death. What an irony; what a tragedy!

Notice that Jesus spoke of two different ways that they dealt with the prophets:

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1. They killed them
2. They stoned them to death. Stoning was a way to carry out the judgment of God. The tragedy here was that the real prophets were dealt with as if they were false prophets.

Jesus used a simile to show His feelings for Jerusalem. Notice His words:

I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" Luke 13:34b

There are nine different Greek words in the New Testament which our versions translate as "long." This word, "thelo" "θέλω" means:

"To will, to wish, implying volition and purpose, frequently a determination, is most usually rendered to will . . . "2

Some consider this word to mean that Jesus had an urgent longing for Jerusalem to return to Him. He did have. The intent here, however, is a bit different. The word focuses not on his burning desire, but rather on His purpose, His volition; His act of the will by which He determined to seek ways to draw Jerusalem to Himself.

Jesus used the simile of a hen and her chicks. A hen will not gather the chicks under her wings unless there is a danger for their existence. Jesus was saying that as a hen gathers her chicks around her in danger, now in Jerusalem's danger He is trying to get her people to gather around Him for safety, but they refused.

Jesus closed this simile with a strong indictment - "but you were not willing!" Jesus did not say, "you did not know any better" The problem was not a lack of knowledge; the problem was a lack of desire.

In His final statement, Jesus, in true prophetic style, pronounces judgment upon them. He said,

"Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" Luke 13:35

The statement, "Your house is left to you desolate" is a way the prophets spoke of coming destruction. We need to ask, however, what does Jesus mean by "house"? This was a way of describing their homes which would be destroyed. It could just as easily be a way of describing the temple itself that would be destroyed with no two stones upon one another. We can only conjecture about this. My own inclination is that the word "house" is used in a broader sense. It was probably intended to suggest both the temple and the homes in which they lived.

The last part of the sentence is a quotation taken from Psalm 118. In all probability a product of the hand of David, this Psalm deals with both pain and rejoicing. As you know, these words were used at the time of the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. It is found in each of the four Gospel records - Matthew 21:6-10; Mark 11:6-11; Luke 19:34-44 and John 12:12-15. There is a possible difference in the accounts. Matthew and Mark say that the people who went before and those who followed Him cried out in this

² John R. Kohlenberger III, Editor, *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984) p. 291

quotation. Luke tells us that the "Whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God . . ." John records that a great crowd who had come to Jerusalem for the feast heard that Jesus was coming and went out to meet Him. It is possible that in different words, each gospel writer was pointing to the same group of people. The text is not explicit at this point. We will deal with this at greater length when we come to chapter 19.

To what is Jesus referring in our text? No one can speak with authority on this issue. It appears to this author that He spoke of two things:

1. He spoke of the coming affirmation that He would receive when He reached Jerusalem in a short time.
2. He also spoke of a coming prophetic event that would not come for some time to come.

Whatever the situation may be, we do not know more than this. We do know that this was the way the Jewish people were prepared to salute their Messiah. Jesus was, to this extent, claiming to be their Messiah. That much was clear to all of them.

The Conclusion

This chapter gives some interesting information about the kingdom of God. These people of God are focused more on healing the sick and ministering to the needy than on the detailing of the rules which men have written. It is our unabashed purpose in the world to determine that though the kingdom is not noted for its size it must still have a changing effect upon the larger society.

We must look at our lives where we live and work. How are we making the healing of the sick and the ministry to the needy a priority? What are we doing to change society? Jesus made it clear that it is our task to mold and shape society although it is many times larger than the kingdom of God. What will we do to make that expectation of Christ a reality?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 16

LUKE 14:1-35

JESUS HEALS AND TEACHES IN A PHARISEE'S HOME

1. In our best Greek manuscripts there are five paragraphs in Luke 14. On the chart below write a summary of seven words or less for each paragraph.

14:1-6	
14:7-14	
14:15-24	
14:25-33	
14:34, 35	

2. In 14:1-6, Jesus was invited to dine in the home of a prominent Pharisee.
- This paragraph begins with the word "and" which suggests that the message of the previous paragraph is being continued and additional information is being provided.
 - Who raised the issue?
 - What additional information does this tell you?
 - What significance, if any, do you attach to the facts that this was the Sabbath and the man with dropsy sat in front of Jesus?
 - Put yourself into the place of the Pharisees. You were trying to trap Jesus and suddenly He confronts you with a question you can not answer easily. What would you think?
 - Why do you think the Pharisees remained silent in 14:4?
 - Jesus asked another question, in 14:5, that they could easily answer.
 - What does the ox in the cistern have to do with the healing on the Sabbath?
 - What was Jesus really saying in this question?
 - Again, in 14:6, why do you think the Pharisees had nothing to say?
3. In 14:7-14, Jesus taught the guests who sat at the Pharisee's table with Him.
- What caused Jesus to teach in this manner?
 - What, if anything, did Jesus tell these guests that they did not know before?
 - What consequences did Jesus describe as a possible result of their choices?
 - What personal quality was Jesus encouraging in 14:10?
 - In 14:11, Jesus gave two principles.
 - State these principles in your own words.
 - Is there any way in which these principles seem to contradict themselves? Please explain.
 - In 14:12, Jesus spoke directly to His host.
 - What did Jesus instruct His host to do?

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- (2). If you were that Pharisee, how would feel when Jesus said this?
- (3). What difference would it make if a host received a return invitation?
- g. In 14:13, 14, Jesus gave His host some unusual instructions.
 - (1). What instructions did Jesus give?
 - (2). What promise did Jesus make?
 - (3). If you were that host, what would you think about this?
- 4. In 14:15-24, Jesus used a parable about guests who were too busy to attend a feast.
 - a. In 14:15, another guest pronounced a blessing on the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.
 - (1). Why would he make such a statement?
 - (2). What feast was he talking about?
 - (3). Why would this guest make such a statement?
 - (4). What did he mean?
 - (5). How did Jesus reply to this statement?
 - b. Three guests, in Jesus' parable, made excuses for their absence from a feast.
 - (1). In 14:18, why did the first guest say he could not attend?
 - (a). Was his reason valid?
 - (b). Would Jesus call this a reason or an excuse? Why?
 - (2). In 14:19, What explanation did the second guest give for his absence?
 - (a). Was his reason valid?
 - (b). Would Jesus call this a reason or an excuse? Why?
 - (3). In 14:20, what explanation did the third guest give for his absence?
 - (a). Was his reason valid?
 - (b). Would Jesus call this a reason or an excuse? Why?
 - (4). What is the single issue Jesus was dealing with in this entire parable?
 - c. In 14:21, Jesus continues the parable he had been teaching. How does this verse relate to 14:15-20?
 - d. In 14:22, Jesus continues with the parable as the servant reports that his task was complete. What was Jesus teaching the other guests in this verse?
 - e. Jesus reaches the climax of his parable in 14:23, 24.
 - (1). What was the real message of this climax?
 - (2). What was the point of the final promise/threat mentioned in 14:24?
- 5. In Luke 14:25-33, the scene changes. Jesus is walking along with a large crowd.
 - a. In 14:26, 27, Jesus talked about the cost of being His disciple. What was the price?
 - b. Read 14:26, 27 carefully. These are very strong statements. What was Jesus really saying?
 - c. In 14:28-33 Jesus used two illustrations:
 - (1). What was Jesus illustrating?
 - (2). What are the two illustrations?
 - (3). What does he say about each illustration?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 16

- d. Jesus gives us some hints as to what he was doing.
 - (1). In 14:28 and 31, He began with the word "suppose." What does this suggest?
 - (2). In 14:33, Jesus began with the words "In the same way..." What does this suggest?
- 6. In 14:34, 35, Jesus made some interesting statements about salt.
 - a. What did He say?
 - b. What did He mean?
- 7. Jesus concluded the chapter with the oft repeated words, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." What did He mean by this?
- 8. Reflect on Luke chapter 14. It contains some very strong statements.
 - a. What was Jesus saying to those who would follow Him?
 - b. What was He saying to you?

LESSON 16: – LUKE 14:1-35

JESUS HEALS AND TEACHES IN A PHARISEE'S HOME

Introduction

In our best Greek documents, there are five paragraphs in Luke chapter 14. They are as follows:

14:1-6	Jesus Healed the Dropsied Man on Sabbath
14:7-14	Guests: Take the Lowest Seat
14:15-24	Excuses of Invited Guests
14:25-33	The Cost of Discipleship
14:34, 35	The usefulness of salt

14:1-6 - Jesus Healed a Man with Dropsy on the Sabbath

In our best Greek documents, this paragraph begins with the word "and." This suggests that 14:1-6 is a continuation of the idea in 13:31-35. In this latter paragraph, Jesus talked about Jerusalem's murder of prophets. This was particularly tragic because they came to proclaim the word of the Lord. This paragraph, 14:1-6, deals with Jesus being an invited guest in the home of a Pharisee. One must wonder, just how do 13:31-35 and 14:1-6 tie together? They tie together quite well. The fact that Jesus was the invited guest of a Pharisee does not mean that they were His friends. Indeed it may well be that they were setting a trap for him.

As is so common in Luke, the time designation is quite general:

***One Sabbath**, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. Luke 14:1*

One wonders, why would the pharisee invite Jesus to dinner when they were His bitter enemies? You will note that Luke gave some very important hints when he said:

"...Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee..." Luke 14:1

Symbols were very important in the life of the Jewish people. They had four different symbols to indicate that someone had been forgiven. They were as follows:

1. Invite the guilty person into your house
2. Eat with the guilty person
3. Share salt with the guilty person
4. Kiss the guilty party

The prominent Pharisee extended two of these four symbols of forgiveness to Jesus. You may remember that Joseph extended all four of these symbols of forgiveness to his brothers before telling them that he was their brother. We wonder, knowing that these symbols of forgiveness had been extended, why would the Pharisee then create compromising situations? Whatever else may have been on their minds, the Pharisees wanted to watch Him carefully to see if they could trap him.

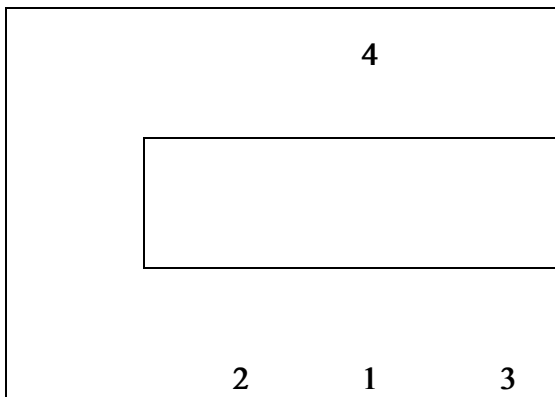
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Luke also gave us another clear insight into the motives of the master of the house where Jesus was a guest.

*There **in front of him** was a man suffering from dropsy. Luke 14:2*

Was it accidental that this man with dropsy just happened to be sitting across the table from Jesus at a meal on the Sabbath? That was hardly possible. They had a very strict code about places of prominence. The drawing which follows gives some idea of the situation in which Jesus found Himself. He would have been an honored guest. That meant that He would have reclined in position two or three. The man with dropsy, however, must have reclined in one of the most humble positions at the table, at position four.

1. The host
2. The most honored guest - Jesus
3. The second most honored guest.
4. The position of the man with dropsy.



If each person at the table was resting on their left elbow, as they were supposed to do, then Jesus would be looking directly into the eyes of the man with dropsy.

Luke continues the story in a rather shocking way. He said:

Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" Luke 14:3

Notice that Jesus took the offensive. It appears that they brought Jesus into this situation in order to try to trap Him. He responded by going on the offensive.

The question Jesus asked was a delicate one. Ancient Rabbis had made some careful pronouncements about what could and could not be done concerning healing. These Rabbis concluded that it was permissible to preserve life on the Sabbath, but it was not permissible to improve life on the Sabbath. Everyone at the table knew exactly what this meant to the observant Jew and they also had to be aware of the trap that had been set for Jesus.

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Jesus used the word "heal" which is "therepeuo" "θεραπεύω". It literally means to serve, to care for the sick, but the New Testament use of the term is almost universally the real physical and spiritual healing that Messiah brings.

Jesus certainly caught the Pharisees off guard. They were busy setting a trap for Him and while that was happening, He put them on an embarrassing spot. Notice what Luke said:

But they remained silent... Luke 14:4a

Why would the Pharisees be silent? They knew these teachings of the ancient Rabbis as well as Jesus did. It becomes clear that their purpose was not to discover truth, but to trap Jesus in such a way that they could get rid of Him. He had become a liability to their cause. If they answered Him, they would defeat their own cause:

- a. If they said it was unlawful to heal on the Sabbath, then they would provide further evidence for their reputation of being hardened against the needs of the suffering.
- b. If they said it was lawful, they could be held in contempt of the teachings of the Rabbis.
- c. If they spoke at all, they would lose the opportunity to trap Jesus on this very issue.

With these options in mind, the Pharisees apparently felt it was the better part of wisdom to say nothing at all.

Luke gives a vivid picture of Jesus' dealings with the Pharisees.

But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him away. Luke 14:4

Most of us, if we knew that a trap had been set for us, would be extremely careful not to allow ourselves to fall into that trap. It is clear that Jesus knew the trap was set. Knowing that, however, He met the attack head-on. This was not to be combative, but to deal very clearly with the issue. There was no doubt in anyone's mind about how Jesus felt about their understanding of the law. His priority was not to avoid conflict, but rather to teach truth.

He accomplished this by attempting to teach them what the law really meant.

Then he asked them, "If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?" Luke 14:5

Did you ever wonder why Jesus argued so much with the Pharisees about the Sabbath? It was not because it was the most important command, though it was important. It may well have been because the Jewish teachers had made so many pronouncements about the observance of Sabbath, splitting hairs in many ways.

Pharisees were known for spinning philosophical arguments about issues of the law. Jesus immediately removed the discussion from the theoretical to the very practical areas of life. He applied the issue to their daily life. The scenario that Jesus presented had probably happened to them. If they had answered, they would have been forced to say that they would, and probably had removed their child or animal from an abandoned cistern. These "cisterns" or "pits" were dug out of the rock to be receptacles for rain water in order to save it for more arid times of the year. It was in one of these that Joseph was placed by his brothers.

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The Pharisees would get their child or animal out of a cistern on the Sabbath and never give it a thought. The law gave them this right.

Jesus was pointing out a flaw in their thinking. The Pharisees would, with impunity, take an animal out of a cistern on the Sabbath, but they would not do as much for a sick human being whom God valued much more than the animals. Pharisees would work to feed and water their animals on the Sabbath, but they would not sanction healing on the Sabbath because they considered that work. Again, Jesus was pointing out a serious flaw in the thinking and values of the Pharisees. They were more caring for their animals than they were for needy human beings.

Luke points out, in vivid terms, how the Pharisees responded to Jesus' question.

And they had nothing to say. Luke 14:6

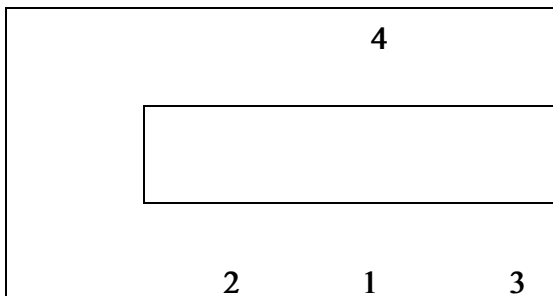
Luke spoke very carefully. It was not that they just did not speak. There was silence because there was nothing that the Pharisees could say. Let me emphasize the fact that Jesus has taken the offensive. They brought Him into the house to trap Him, but ever since He entered the house, He has had them on the spot of being very defensive.

This was very difficult for the Pharisees. They were known as the experts on the law. Here, however, one who was not a Pharisee has been asking one question after another that they could not or would not profitably answer without being at odds with the whole community. I stress this because it gives you a picture of Jesus that Luke stresses over and over again - He is not passive, but very aggressively teaches and explains the truth of the law.

14:7-14 - Guests: Take the Lowest Seats

Luke continues with his picture of the aggressive behavior of Jesus. As an honored guest, Jesus would be sitting at a special place at the table. Dr. Fleming gives us some insights into the seating arrangements of that time and part of the world.

1. The place of the host
2. The place of the most honored guest
3. The place of the next most honored guest
4. The least honored guest



Positions of honor decline counterclockwise from number two to number four.

This paragraph contains a parable which grew out of Jesus' observation that guests came in and attempted to take very honored positions for themselves. This would often

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result in an embarrassing request by the host that they move from the honored position to the lowest position - number four. Luke presents the issue in these words:

When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable. Luke 14:7

Everything in this parable must be interpreted in light of this observation by Luke. The guests attempt to secure the most prestigious seats at this table. It was considered impolite by their whole society, and they knew it.

Jesus attempted to convey a spiritual teaching by pointing what He had observed. As He did so often, Jesus conveyed His message by means of a parable. There are four parts to this parable

1. He told the story - v. 8
2. He stated the consequences -v. 9
3. He exhorted them to proper conduct - v. 10
4. He stated the principle involved - v. 11

He said,

"When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited." Luke 14:8

This was a hypothetical situation which Jesus used to teach an important lesson. The purpose of a wedding feast was to celebrate with the two families the great gift God has given in the human family. By their actions, the people Jesus described had made this a popularity contest, and not a celebration of the blessing of God.

Jesus was saying that honor was something that others bestow upon a person, not something they take for themselves. Jesus was urging them to be humble - an unusual quality in any era.

In verse 9, Jesus describes the consequences of taking honor for yourself. He said,

"If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place." Luke 14:9

The embarrassment of not only being in the wrong place, but of having gotten there through pride would make everyone who heard Him cringe. Jesus' reasoning was subtle. He was saying that they hurried in to get the favored seat, but because of their pride, they ended up in the lowest seat, that which would be occupied by the servant on Passover. He was also saying that pride leads to humiliation, not honor.

In the next sentence, Jesus gives an encouragement concerning how they ought to act. In so doing, notice that Jesus was suggesting a way to think of themselves.

"But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests." Luke 14:10

The sentence begins with the word "but." This suggests that there is a strong contrast between what Jesus was saying here and what He had said previously. Jesus contrasted

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the pride of taking the most important seats without being invited to do so with the idea of taking the lowest seat and then being invited, by your host, to take a more honorable seat.

In the final sentence of this parable, Jesus describes the principle with which He had been dealing. He said,

"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted". Luke 14:11

Honor is the response to humility by those around us, it is not the product of one's striving. Pride will be humiliated and humility will be honored. It can not be otherwise. Remember for a moment where Jesus was when He made this statement. The Pharisees were proud people. In a setting where He had been brought to be humiliated, Jesus gently urges people to be humble, and change their prideful ways.

In the second part of this paragraph, Jesus speaks directly to His host, who was a proud Pharisee. Jesus spoke to this leader of the Pharisees in two parts.

In the first part, Jesus described what He thought the host should not do. He said,

Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid." Luke 14:12

Again, Jesus used an experience that the people understood very well in order to teach something that they did not understand at all. Everyone knew that if you were invited to be a guest, it was expected that you would reciprocate. Jesus was saying that this was futile. In this cultural necessity, the persons desire was lost. He wanted to give a gift to his friend. When the friend reciprocated, the gift was no longer a gift; just a social necessity.

Having identified what His host should not do, Jesus now turns His attention to what the host ought to do. Notice what Jesus said to the host:

***"BUT** when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." Luke 14:13, 14*

Jesus was dealing with the motive behind the invitation. He was saying, if you really want to give a gift, invite the people who could not possibly repay your invitation. Jesus offers two forms of repayment even when the guests can not reciprocate:

1. You will be blessed. The word "blessed" really means happy. Happiness is the reward of the truly generous.
2. You will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous.

On the other hand, if you give a banquet simply to impress your guests with your ability or your generosity, then you get no repayment at all. Again, we must remember that Jesus had been the guest of persons who apparently had some ulterior motives for inviting Him. He was saying that they would receive no reward for this at all. If they really wanted to accomplish something, then invite the ones who are never invited and can not reciprocate.

14:15-24 - Excuses of Invited Guests

In this paragraph, Jesus is still at the table of the prominent Pharisee. Luke describes the scene in vivid terms:

When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." Luke 14:15

In simple terms, this was an angry put-down. The prominent and the powerful were eager to impress guests with their lavish feasts. For Jesus to tell them to invite the poor who could not reciprocate would be seen as an insult. One of those at the table with Jesus apparently decided to put Jesus in His place with a pompous statement. The man's words were more than just high sounding rhetoric. It was the fond hope of every Pharisee. They believed that there would be a great feast, like the feasts of the Jews, in heaven. Those who had been extremely pious, like Pharisees, would be invited to that feast. In what appears to be arrogant pride, the man pontificated,

"Blessed is the man who will eat at the feasting the kingdom of God. Luke 14:15b

It is as though he was saying to Jesus, "You can accost us if you like, but we are the ones who will take part in the great feast in heaven." Obviously, Jesus had struck a nerve in this man.

Jesus was not easily put-down. He had a response and it came, as it often did, in the form of a parable.

Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come for everything is now ready.'" Luke 14:16, 17

Everyone at the table would have understood exactly what Jesus was talking about. In our culture, when an invitation is extended, the time is made known immediately. That was not true in that culture. The guest was told on what day the feast would be held. On the appointed day, the guest waited in readiness for the coming of the servant to tell him that the feast was prepared to be served. This would be the first time that the guest would know the time the feast was to be served. This required that an invited guest must mark the day and then just keep the time open in order to be able to respond when the servant announced the readiness of the meal. This is precisely the picture that Jesus painted in this parable.

In the following verse, Jesus painted a picture with which the guests at this table were probably not familiar, but had wondered what would take place if this scenario played-out. Jesus said:

"But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please have me excused.'" Luke 14:18

Whatever else the explanations of the three men were, Jesus makes it clear that each one was an excuse. The word Jesus used for "excuse" was "paraiteomai" or

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"παραιτέομαι" means to beg-off, to ask to be excused. It could be simply making an excuse. The interesting thing about this statement is that they did this all at once, as if in unison.

Frankly, scholars differ concerning the plausibility of the excuses that were offered. Most scholars agree, however, that they were in fact excuses. Notice the scenario that Jesus painted.

The first said, "I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me." Luke 14:19

A number of scholars have pointed to this with disdain. Their comment is that no one would purchase a piece of property without seeing it. That is true, but it seems to me that Jesus was not saying that.

In Palestine, there were certain procedures associated with the purchase of a piece of property. The sale was not complete until each item had been accomplished. When the bargaining was complete, the "earnest money" and pouch of dirt exchanged, the transaction was not yet complete. It was still required that the purchaser walk throughout the property to assert his claim upon it before it was legally his. In Genesis 13:17, God told Abraham to "Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you." This is exactly the same thing that the invited guest was going to do. You may remember that in the book of Joshua, God said:

*"Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them - to the Israelites. I will give you **every place where you set your foot**, as I promised Moses." Joshua 1:2,
3*

Israel wanted to just go in and settle down, but God wanted them to **walk through the land** and assert their claim to the whole territory. This, again, is precisely the same custom that the invited guest was talking about. It was not that he had never seen the property; it was that he had this final custom to perform before the property was legally his.

We must say again that this was an excuse. He had known about the invitation to this feast for a long time. If he had an irreconcilable conflict, he could have asked to be excused when the invitation was extended. It appears, however, that this was a case of conflicting priorities. The man in the story apparently thought that it was more important to complete the property transaction than it was to keep his commitment to this feast.

Jesus was building a case. He told of a second invited guest who requested to be excused. He said,

Another said, "I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me." Luke 14:19

Again, it was not as though this man had purchased the animals sight-unseen. He had seen the animals and knew a great deal about their abilities. He had known about the coming feast for quite a length of time, probably before he decided to buy the oxen. The "trying" of the oxen was a way of finalizing the transaction just as "walking through the land" was a way of finalizing the sale of the property.

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Here again we are dealing with an excuse. We are not dealing with the purchase of unproven animals so much as we are dealing with different levels of priority. It appears that this man considered the completion of the purchase of the five yoke of oxen a higher priority than the attendance of the feast to which he had previously committed himself.

Jesus was not finished. He was using repetition as a way to strongly emphasize a point. His third illustration was very direct.

Still another said, "I just got married, so I can't come." Luke 14:20

Jesus' presentation of this excuse is quite different. There is no request for being excused, just an announcement, "I can't come." The people who listened would understand the difference in this instance very well. During the first year of one's marriage there were few responsibilities that were required of the couple. They were excused from most things.

We must remember, again, that Jesus spoke of these as excuses. Just getting married was a valid reason not to attend such a feast, but the arrangements for this wedding had been a long time in the making and the groom would have known when he was getting married when he received the invitation to the feast. Here again it is a case of priorities. It was more important to be with his wife than to keep his word in accepting the invitation to this feast. This is precisely how all of these people would understand these three illustrations.

Jesus continued with the parable. Having been refused by these three honored guests, the servant returned to bring this news to his master. This is how Jesus expressed the host's angry disappointment.

"The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'" Luke 14:21

It was clear to the host that other priorities had superseded his invitation. He was just not as important as the other things in the lives of his guests.

The response of the host was one of anger and frustration. In his frustration, the host instructed the servant to go out and get the people who did not have too many other things to do to attend his feast. He instructed them to get the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame.

It could not possibly have escaped the memory of those who listened to Jesus that He had just previously instructed them to give a feast for those who could not possibly return the favor - the poor, crippled blind and lame. Jesus had chosen a very dramatic way to drive home His point. Jesus not only repeated His instruction, but did it in a very forceful way. It is clear that they could never forget what He was trying to say to them.

The next part of the parable was a masterful way of teaching an unwilling audience something about the nature of God.

"Sir," the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'" Luke 14:22

Talking with people whose motive for inviting people to their feasts was to impress others and to increase their reputation in the community, Jesus implies something about the

generous nature of God. His major concern was not what can these people do for me, but rather how can I make room for all of them. The focus of this question was that there was room for more and the master wanted to use every possible place for guests. That is what God is like. He is so generous that He wants every possible person to receive the benefits of His grace.

In the closing segment of this parable, Jesus described the intent of the master's response to the announcement of the servant.

Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house may be full.. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.' Luke 14:23, 24

The master sent his servant into some of the less desirable places in the community to bring in needy people; those whose social calendar was not too full to share the feast with him. God is not concerned about one's place in the social structure of the community. God is totally absorbed with people, not with their social climbing.

The second intent of the host was that He would make sure that those who had been invited would not receive even a taste of his banquet. Though carefully put, this was a strong warning to those who would listen.

14:25-33 - The Cost of Discipleship

There are three parts to this paragraph:

1. The scene changes - from banquet to travelling with Jesus. V. 25
2. The terms of discipleship - vs. 26, 27
3. Exhortations to count the cost of discipleship before accepting the challenge of discipleship- vs. 28-33.

1. The scene changes - v. 25

The other paragraphs in this chapter took place in the home of a prominent Pharisee where Jesus was invited to dine. In that home, a trap was set for Jesus to see if they could find something to hold against Him to get rid of Him.

Verse 25 is a totally different scene. As usual, Luke is not time specific, nor does he give careful identification of the area where this took place.

*Large crowds were traveling with Jesus and turning to them he said...
Luke 14:25*

This statement would not surprise anyone from that day. Most Rabbis would take the opportunity to teach as they walked along the road traveling from one city to another. That is what Jesus was doing in this instance.

2. The Terms of Discipleship - vs. 26, 27

In these two verses, Jesus made some strong statements about what is involved in being His disciple. He said:

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life - he can not be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:26, 27

This is a statement of condition - an "if-then" clause. The very way in which it was spoken and written indicate that it was intended to describe what is required of Jesus' disciples.

Jesus begins His statement of the conditions of discipleship by identifying the people this person will be required to "hate."

The word "hate" is "miseo" - "μίσω" which describes malicious and unjustifiable feelings toward others whether the object of those feelings is innocent or guilty. A word of caution is appropriate here. We must be prepared to accept exactly what the Scriptures teach. At the same time, we must be absolutely certain that our understanding is what the Scriptures are teaching. In a host of instances and statements, the rest of Scripture teaches just the contrary of our choosing to hate anyone. We do not believe that Scripture ever contradicts itself. Thus, we must look again to see what it is, specifically, that Jesus was saying in these difficult words. Elsewhere, Jesus teaches us to love even our enemies. We are forced to ask ourselves, "In view of this fact, why would Jesus teach people to hate every member of their family?" As previously indicated, a careful look at the Greek text only compounds the problem - it says exactly what it appears to say.

Some will say, "If Jesus said it, then I must do it." I admire and affirm strong commitment, but I believe there is at least one other possible position one can hold in this case. We know that great teachers of that day liked to use a linguistic tool called hyperbole. A hyperbole is an exaggeration intentionally made in an effort to stress a point. An illustration of this might be, "He is as old as the hills." No man is as old as the hills, but the statement does get a point across. Jesus' words diametrically conflict with ten commandments where we are unequivocally commanded to honor our parents. I do not believe that is what Jesus was saying. In this whole paragraph, Jesus is talking about the fact that it is costly to be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus is saying that Jesus Christ must be more important than parents, family, friends and possessions. Nothing can be more important than our commitment to Jesus. In some places Christians have been called upon to choose between their families and Jesus because the Christian faith was not legal in the place where they lived. Jesus **was** saying that if it comes to a choice, then the disciple must choose Jesus if the disciple is to be faithful. Jesus continued with the same idea, but with a different image. He talked about carrying our cross. Again He is talking about the disciple's priority in life. The disciple must be prepared to bear whatever is necessary in order to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. It may mean that he will have to endure separation from his family in order to bear that cross, but if that is necessary, then the disciple must be prepared to bear it. These are particularly difficult words for us because we are so used to a faith that makes no great demands upon us in terms of our choices in life. Jesus' words are strong. Only those who will put Him ahead of every other value in life; those who are willing to near the cross no matter what it entails are able to be His disciples.

3. Exhortations to count the cost before accepting the challenge of discipleship - vs. 28-33

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In this portion of the paragraph Jesus uses illustrations to encourage people to count the cost before making such a commitment to be His disciple. He begins with a hypothetical case.

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?"

Luke 14:28

The word "suppose" is clear evidence that this is a hypothetical illustration. It is, however, an illustration with which every person who listened would be completely familiar. The question Jesus asked was rhetorical. No one would be surprised to discover the answer. Jesus even suggests the answer by the way he asked the question, "Will he not first sit down..." The natural answer to His question would be "certainly he would..." Jesus was establishing the fact that counting the cost before acting is a reasonable thing to do.

Jesus continued His line of reasoning by giving a reason for what He had said. Notice He begins with the word "for" which suggests a coming reason or explanation.

"For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'" Luke 14:28-30

Everyone knew that ridicule awaited those who acted before they counted the cost. That is just what Jesus was trying to illustrate.

According to the Scriptures truth is established by two or three witnesses, never just one. With that in mind, Jesus chooses a second illustration to prove His point even more clearly than before.

This illustration has to do with a king going to battle. It was also a scenario with which everyone in the land would be totally familiar.

"or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long off and will ask for terms of peace." Luke 14:31, 32

This is a way of saying, it only makes sense to plan before you commit yourself to a given direction in life. This illustration is handled a bit differently by Jesus. Notice that He uses it as a simile.

"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:33

The words "in the same way" are clear indication that this is a simile; focusing on something the hearer knows well in order to illustrate something they do not know well at all, but which is similar to the illustration given. In the same way that a king counts the cost of his battle choices so the potential disciple must count the cost if he is to seriously consider becoming a disciple of Jesus. Jesus is simply saying, do not take it lightly.

14:34, 35 - The Usefulness of Salt

Jesus uses real subtlety to indicate just how important these exhortations are. The image Jesus used to do this has been a source of confusion for some people. Jesus said:

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"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Luke 14:34, 35

The confusion comes at the point where Jesus speaks of salt losing its saltiness. This does not happen. Archaeologists have excavated salt from ancient tombs which are thousands of years old, but the salt is as salty as it was when it was placed in the tomb for the future use of that king.

Let me talk about a possible understanding of this statement. We know that many people in Palestine, at that time, went to the area of the Dead Sea and dug up salt. In the process, some dirt would be dug up with the salt. Upon returning home, the person would place this salt in a container. They would use the salt by picking the salt out from the soil. Eventually all the salt would be taken out and only salty soil would be left in the container. This soil was useless. If they put it on the manure pile, it would do damage to the land on which the manure was spread. The contents of the salt container were literally good for nothing but to be thrown on the road to fill the ruts.

Jesus said that if the person who wishes to be a disciple is unable to put Jesus first in his life, he is as useless in the kingdom as the dirt from which all the salt has been removed.

There are a number of phrases that Jesus used relatedly. One of those phrases is this paragraph:

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Luke 14:35b

This strange statement was carefully worded. Many people are capable of hearing sounds, but do not hear what Jesus is saying. Jesus said, in effect, "If you have any spiritual insight at all, listen to what I am saying to you."

There are many in our time who have no hearing problem at all, but they are totally deaf when it comes to spiritual understanding. Jesus was saying, if you have the ability to discern spiritual truth, listen carefully. Good advice!

Conclusion

This chapter contains a lot of pain because religious leaders pretended to do a kindness for Jesus when they were setting a trap for Him. Jesus knew of their deception. He taught them about the great longing of the Father to welcome people to Himself. Jesus taught them about the desperate need to consider carefully whether they were willing to pay the price to be His disciple.

Often the church, has suffered from the inability of Christians to make Him the sole priority of their lives. In every instance, it had a devastating effect upon the witness of the church. We need to hear the message of Jesus: unless we are willing to make Him more important than family, position, possessions or anything else in life, then our faith will be as useless as salt ground from which salt has been removed. What about your relationship to Jesus Christ? Is there anything at all in your life more important to you than your relationship to Christ?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 17

LUKE 15:1-32

JESUS TEACHES THREE PARABLES ON LOSTNESS

1. In our best Greek manuscripts, there are four paragraphs in Luke chapter 15. On the table below, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

15:1-7	
15:8-10	
15:11-24	
15:25-32	

2. In Luke 15, Jesus tells three parables about lostness. What reason can you find in the text for His three stories?
3. In 15:1-7, Jesus tells the story of the lost sheep.
 - a. Jesus begins the parable with the word "suppose." What does this tell you?
 - b. In 15:7, Jesus makes a simile out of this story. What is Jesus trying to clarify?
 - c. Summarize the message of this parable in one brief sentence.
4. In Luke 15:8-10, Jesus tells the story of the lost coin.
 - a. Why would this coin be so important?
 - b. In what ways is this parable similar to the parable of the lost sheep?
 - c. How does this parable answer the Pharisee's response in 15:1, 2?
5. In 15:11-24, Jesus tells the story of the younger lost son.
 - a. Imagine yourself in the place of the father in 15:11, 12. How would you feel?
 - b. There are several statements, in 15:11, 12, that are shocking.
 - (1). What are these statements?
 - (2). What do they mean?
 - c. In 15:20b, Jesus said that the father saw his son; ran to meet him; threw his arms around the boy and kissed him. What is the significance of these details?
 - d. Put yourself into the position of the younger son as he makes his confession to his father, in 15:21. What did you feel?

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- e. On the chart below, record some of the "good qualities" and "the not so good qualities" of the **younger son** as seen in Luke 15:11-24.

THE GOOD QUALITIES	THE NOT SO GOOD QUALITIES

- f. What was the father trying to accomplish in his instructions to his servants concerning the robe, ring and sandals?
- g. The father instructed the servants to prepare a great feast. How does the feast relate to the robe, ring and sandals?
- h. In 15:24, the father claims the returned wanderer as his son. What does the father mean when he said, "this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found"?
6. In 15:25-32, the story addresses the participation of the older son.
- a. What does it tell you when Jesus described the older son as returning from the field at the time the feast had already begun?
- b. In 15:27, the servant mentioned the fattened calf. What significance can we attach to this information?
- c. The older brother's anger is not difficult to understand. Why would he refuse to go in to the feast?
- d. Jesus paints an emotional picture of the father pleading with his angry son. What does this picture accomplish?
- e. The older son defends his position with an emotional statement in 15:29, 30. Put yourself into that son's position. What would you feel? What would you be trying to say?
- f. In 15:25-32, there are many pieces of information concerning the older son.
(1). On the chart below list "the good qualities" and "the not so good qualities" of this **older son**.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 17

THE GOOD QUALITIES	THE NOT SO GOOD QUALITIES

(2). Study this list. What does this information tell you?

7. Throughout the entire story, 15:11-32, Jesus said many things about the **father of the two boys**. On the chart below, list "The Good Qualities" and "The Not So Good Qualities" that you find.

THE GOOD QUALITIES	THE NOT SO GOOD QUALITIES

8. In 15:11-32, **If** Jesus was using the father and his two sons to portray the lives of people who existed at that time, **then** identify the person or persons that each portrays:
- Father
 - Older son
 - Younger son
9. Reflect on the entire story again. About whom is Jesus really speaking? What did He say about that person?
10. Now look at your own life. Where do you fit into this story? What was Jesus saying specifically about you?

LESSON 17: – LUKE 15:1-32

JESUS TEACHES THREE PARABLES ON LOSTNESS

Introduction

In our best Greek manuscripts there are four paragraphs in Luke chapter 15. I have summarized their content as follows:

15:1-7	The Lost Sheep
15:8-10	The Lost Coin
15:11-24	The Father of the Lost Younger Son
15:25-32	The Father of the Lost Older Son

15:1-7 - The Lost Sheep

Without announcement of where or when the experience took place, Luke declared that Jesus was surrounded by tax collectors and "sinners." Luke said it this way:

*Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathered around to hear him.
Luke 15:1*

I have often wondered just how these outcasts of society got the impression that Jesus would welcome them to be with Him. Everyone else in the community treated these people as though they did not exist. In that region, one would expect the very religious to be even more distant than the others. Somehow these people discovered that though Jesus did not approve of their lifestyle, He still cared deeply for them. He would be the only one in the area who would care about them at all. Much to the chagrin of the Scribes and Pharisees, the tax collectors, thieves, murderers and prostitutes discovered His warm welcome and swarmed around Him as He taught.

Such drastic actions were certain to draw a stern reaction from religious leaders. Notice that verse two begins with the word "but." This suggests a strong contrast between the careful attention of the tax collectors and "sinners" and the distant reaction of the Scribes and Pharisees.

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Luke 15:2

What a contrast! The Pharisees and Teachers of the law were muttering among themselves. On the other hand, you have the social outcasts in rapt attention to the teaching of Jesus. The muttering of the Pharisees was not insignificant chatter. They knew that anyone who "welcomes sinners and eats with them" would face some dire consequences in the community. They believed that if you associate with a person then you approve of them. If you associate with a criminal, then the community would treat you as they would treat the criminal. The Pharisees, and the good people of the community, had nothing to do with anyone who associated with tax collectors. They considered these people to be guilty of unforgivable treason. It was forbidden for any Pharisee to have any dealings with these outcast peoples. They could have no business dealings; they could have no family ties with them; they could not so much as speak with

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them. Any contact with such people would defile the Pharisee. The culture decreed that anyone who associated with tax collectors was ineligible to be a witness in court, even on his own behalf, for as long as he lived. Everyone would understand the shock and outrage of these religious leaders.

In response to the shock and outrage of the Pharisees, Jesus told these parables:

1. The Lost Sheep
2. The Lost Coin
3. The Lost Son

Did you ever wonder why Jesus told **three** parables about lostness? In Deuteronomy 17:6, the law clearly states:

*On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.
Deuteronomy 17:6*

Truth was established at the mouth of two or three witnesses. Repeatedly throughout the New Testament the authors quoted two or three passages of Scripture to support the idea about which they were writing. Jesus did this repeatedly throughout His teachings.

You will note that there is a progression in the stories. Each deals with substantial loss. Each story ends with the lost being found. Each story is followed by a celebration when the lost were found. There is progression in the personal value of that which was lost - the sheep, the coin, the son.

Notice the way Jesus began the story:

Then Jesus told them this parable: "suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?" Luke 15:3, 4

The word "suppose" suggests that this was not an actual event, but a story Jesus used to get His point across. Again, this story is one that the whole audience would have understood perfectly. They all would have known situations of this nature.

A flock of a hundred sheep would be considered quite large. This kind of situation would probably be a community flock made up of the sheep of each member of the community. One or two shepherds would be hired to care for the sheep of the whole community.

When Jesus said that the shepherd would leave the 99 sheep in the open, He was not saying that he would leave them unattended. Shepherds tended to keep their flocks in the same area so that they could be of assistance to each other. If a shepherd found himself and his herd in this situation he would ask for help. He would ask another shepherd to keep an eye on his flock while he went to find the lost animal. To leave that many sheep alone was courting disaster. He might leave the sheep in the open, but they would be under the care of another shepherd. This was because it was not safe for the animals to be left totally alone.

Notice how Jesus described the discovery of the lost sheep.

JESUS TEACHES THREE PARABLES ON LOSTNESS

"And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.'" Luke 15:5, 6

Notice that when the sheep is found, there is a celebration. The shepherd was deeply concerned about his sheep and afraid that the animal had been lost. The shepherds were so close to the animals that the loss of an animal was treated almost like the loss of a child.

Jesus immediately applies this parable to the question that was put to Him.

*"I tell you that **in the same way** there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." Luke 15:7*

When Jesus said, "in the same way..." He was saying that this was a simile. It is a writing tool with which a person uses something that the readers would know very well to illustrate something that the readers would not know at all. Jesus was saying, just as a shepherd rejoices and throws a party when he finds his lost sheep, so God rejoices with a heavenly party when a sinner repents.

Jesus was specifically answering the question of the Pharisees. He said, I welcome sinners and eat with them because just as each little sheep is important to the owner, so every tax collector and sinner, no matter how he has acted, is important to God.

15:8-10 - The Lost Coin

Though this parable is very short, it is none the less poignant. This parable also begins with the word "suppose." Again this suggests that Jesus probably did not have a specific incident in mind when He told the story.

Luke has a beautiful way of capturing intense emotions in such a story.

"Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?" Luke 15:8

There are at least two possibilities which would help us understand what Jesus was talking about. Jesus was describing a woman of lesser means. These people always live on the sharp edge of poverty. The coin Jesus mentioned was roughly the wage that a man would earn for a day's work. If they lost a day's wage it meant that they would go without food for that day at least and probably more. It was not like losing from the abundance of one's excess income. It was the loss of food and livelihood. I find it easy to understand why she would take such dire measures to find the coin. It is also easy to understand the extent of her rejoicing once the coin was found.

There is still another possible explanation. The fact that Jesus spoke of ten silver coins would jar the memory of the people who listened. In that day, a woman did not wear a wedding ring, she rather wore ten small silver coins on her head covering. The value of these ten coins was determined by the financial status of the family involved. These coins were very special to the woman of that day. If her family owed money, the lender could take their home and belongings, but he could not take the woman's ten coins. Each coin was worth a day's wages. They were, however, priceless to the woman.

If a man divorced his wife, he would take a knife and cut off one of the silver coins. Then everyone who saw her would know that she had been divorced. If a woman lost one

of these coins she would do almost anything to find it because she would not want people to think that she had been divorced.

Looking for a coin on the floor of one of their homes was a little difficult. The average home of that day had one window only. It was 16 or 18 inches in diameter. Even in the height of sunlight, that little window did not let much sunlight into the room. Add to this the fact that the floor was made of packed down dirt and you have complicated the problem a bit more. On top of these dirt floors, the woman often spread leaves or, reeds or rushes both for cleanliness and comfort. Think how hard it would be to find a small silver coin in a darkened room, on a dirt floor covered with reeds and rushes. Nevertheless, she would sweep the floor as often as necessary to find that coin.

Jesus went on to tell how she would feel when she found the coin.

"And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.'" Luke 15:9

The people who listened to Jesus would be fully aware that Jesus had understated the case. The joy of that woman would be beyond description.

Having drawn the description in such careful terms, Jesus proceeded to use it as a simile to describe the issue involved in the Pharisee's question. He was in the process of answering.

"In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Luke 15:10

Again Jesus turns to the tool of describing something that they knew very well to describe something they did not know at all. That is exactly what happened in this situation. It was Jesus' way of answering the Pharisee's question a second way. God would be as excited about seeing the sinner return to Him that He would rejoice with the angels when just one of these outcast sinners repents. Those had to be difficult words for the Pharisees to hear. They did not believe that the tax collectors could be forgiven. For the Pharisees, such people were beyond possible redemption. Jesus saw them differently.

15:11-24 - The Father of the Lost Younger Son

In this paragraph, Jesus tells still another parable as He gives a serious answer to the question of the Pharisees.

Notice that this third parable does not begin with the word "suppose." Some scholars have held that this means that this story probably did happen. This is the kind of thing that no one would allow to happen in their family. We have no way to be certain that this did or did not happen. Jesus does use it, however, as a means to help answer the Pharisee's question at great depth.

Whatever else may be true, the picture Jesus paints would be a shock to anyone who heard it.

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them." Luke 15:11, 12

The younger son's "share" of his father's inheritance was one third. The older son, the heir, would receive a double portion of his father's estate.

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Notice that Jesus said, "So he divided his **property** between them." It would be required of the father that he give two-thirds of the property to his older son and one-third to the younger son.

Notice how Jesus continued to tell this parable:

*"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living."
Luke 15:13*

This statement seems simple enough, but it is not. It was unlawful for a person to sell his father's land inheritance because it had been given them by God. This also accounts for the fact that it was illegal for a Jew to sell his property to a Gentile. The Jews in that area would know what the younger son was doing, trying to get his inheritance early, and would be ashamed to buy the land from him. It was strictly forbidden to sell such land to a Gentile and they were the only ones who would even think of buying it. At this point the Jews who were listening to Jesus would be aghast. Jesus appears to be saying that the younger son apparently sold his land to the Gentiles and prepared to leave the area. The neighbors, much less the boy's family, would never allow the boy to get away with this.

Jesus said that the boy "set off for a distant country..." These Jewish people had a different understanding of what a "distant country" was all about. It is possible that it was a distant land hundreds of miles away. It more probably was a place that was only a short distance away, in miles, but worlds away in terms of lifestyle. Directly east from the Sea of Galilee was a group of cities called the "Decapolis." This means ten cities. Nine of the ten cities were on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. The tenth city was just south and a bit west of the Sea of Galilee. These cities were thoroughly Roman. They had all the things that you would find in a Roman city - gymnasium where the games were played in the nude and where there was a huge idol dedicated to Jupiter. There were arenas where gladiators fought to the death, temples to the Roman gods. These things were quite Roman and quite offensive to the Jewish awareness of God. The lifestyle of those ten cities was everything that Jesus described when He said the boy "squandered his wealth in wild living." It appears that this was the kind of area of which Jesus spoke.

Jesus continued with the story in these terms:

"After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need." Luke 15:14

The picture Jesus painted would surprise no one. That kind of living will certainly lead to early poverty. No one was surprised that a person encounters difficult times and famine, when he has wasted what he had and what could have kept him from such a devastating experience of loss. Another thing that suggests that the "distant country" was not that far away is that the table land to the east of the Jordan River often experienced times of drought and famine. During those times they tried to get water from the lower plateau next to the Jordan river, but that was not always sufficient. The ones who heard Jesus would be very familiar with that scenario for the people of the area.

Jesus was an adept Storyteller. Had we been present, I believe we would have seen a group of people in rapt attention to the story Jesus was telling.

"So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs." Luke 15:15

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The careful attention of Jesus' listeners would now turn to severe shock. It was considered sinful for a Jew to hire himself out to serve a Gentile. It was even more shocking to think of a Jew being paid to feed pigs. Were forbidden for a Jew to touch or feed pigs. He would be continually unclean. He would be totally ostracized from the rest of the Jewish community and from the worship of God. This whole shocking situation is not surprising. It is what one should expect when living a life which is contrary to the expressed will of God.

Jesus continues to describe what happens when people make such selfish choices in life.

"He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything," Luke 15:16

Jesus was describing the depths of poverty and want into which the rebellious young man had fallen. The "pods" of which Jesus spoke were the outer pods of the carob plant. This was used for food for the animals and in extreme cases it was used by human beings as well. This was just about as low as a person could get.

Jesus continued with His gripping story,

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'" Luke 15:17-19

Jesus never lost His appreciation and wonder at the miracle in the creation of mankind. He said of this rebellious young man, "when he came to himself..." It is a way of saying that when a person does the things this young man did, he is not fulfilling the role of mankind at all; he was being something less than a person was intended to be.

With all his flaws, this young man had the ability to be reasonable. He reasoned with himself about his condition. He compared his situation with that of any of the day-laborers who worked for his wealthy father and concluded that he was far worse off than the slaves when in his place as a son in that household he would have been many times over better off than all the daydreamer put together. He had come to the point where he could be honest with himself. He admitted that the hired-laborers had more than they needed to survive while he was starving to death and no one cared.

The young man was decisive. He decided to go back to his father and admit that he was wrong. This was a hard decision which could be very costly to him. Nevertheless, he decided to face his father; confess his wrong; admit that he did not deserve to be forgiven. What a change!

This young man discovered a new sense of justice when "he came to his senses." He was convinced that he had forfeited his right to be his father's son and requested that he be given a job rather than begging that his former position as son be restored.

Many people could think things through, but they often stop short of acting upon these conclusions. That was not true with the young prodigal.

"So he got up and went to his father." Luke 15:20a

He had the courage to do what he knew to be right and just.

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Think about this story for a minute. Jesus started out painting a picture of the worst possible reprobate. His hearers would get into the story and be very angry with the boy. As Jesus continued with the story, He portrayed him as having many very good qualities and the audience would have been hard pressed to continue to dislike him. This is not such an unusual story. Most of us, in one way or another have lived the young prodigal's life and it sounds very familiar.

The story changes drastically in verse 20.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him" Luke 15:20b

This brief portion of a verse is packed with information and meaning. If the father saw his wayward son a long way off, then Jesus was telling us that the father was watching for his boy. It is the picture of the forgiving father longing to know how his wandering boy was doing; a picture of great pain searching for a way to extend forgiveness. This would be a shock to everyone who listened to Jesus.

The crowd would be scandalized to hear Jesus say that the man ran out to meet his son. That was not what would usually happen. Once a boy dishonored his family, his father was not expected to even allow the boy to come near, much less run out to meet him.

There is a good reason Jesus suggested that the man ran to meet his son. As we mentioned earlier, it was considered a crime to sell your property to a Gentile. If the boy sold his land, then he had to sell it to a Gentile. Families normally would never forgive him for such a terrible crime. It was considered so bad that the neighbors would feel it their duty to kill the boy. In fact, they had a ceremony for just such an event. They would take a small clay pot and crush it at the boy's feet. It meant that if he ever came back they would kill him. If this was a report of a real event, then the neighbors would certainly have crushed the clay pot at his feet and would have made good on that threat had he returned. Only the father running out to the boy would keep his neighbors from fulfilling their word to such a terrible person.

When Jesus suggested that the man ran out to meet his son, He had to shock his hearers for two reasons:

1. Jesus had described a household of great wealth. In such a home, the father would not go out to meet anyone. There were servants whose responsibility it was to greet anyone who came to the house and wash their feet before introducing them to the host. It would have been unseemly for the father to even go out doors to meet anyone who came to his home. You may remember that Jephthah, in the book of Judges, got the shock of his life when his daughter came out to greet him upon his triumphant return from battle. This just was not done in the home of a wealthy man.
2. Jesus said the man "ran." A man of stature in the community would not run anywhere, for any reason. Remember, they wore long robes. To run in such a garment, one would have to lift the hem of the garment so that he would not trip over it. In so doing, the man would expose his ankles. This would be considered improper at best. If he could possibly avoid it, no man would do what Jesus suggested.

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I believe that this suggests just how intent the man was on getting to his son before his neighbors arrived. The man was willing to endure the embarrassment of exposing his ankles, if necessary, to preserve the life of his son.

Jesus said that the father "threw his arms around him and kissed him." This statement carried great symbolic meaning. These symbols are used extensively by people from eastern block and Arab countries today. When a man threw his arms around another man he was expressing his trust of the individual. Anyone who got close enough to put his arms around you could in so do thrust a knife through your body. To allow the person to get close enough to put your arms around him was to say, I trust you.

The Jews had four symbolic ways to express forgiveness. One of those was to kiss the one who had dishonored the family. You may remember in the story of Joseph, he kissed his brothers. This was Jesus' way of saying that the father had really forgiven his wayward son who had dragged the family name through the mud.

In verse 21, the wayward son gave the speech he had prepared before his return.

"The Son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' " Luke 15:21

Three of our best New Testament Greek documents contain the words of 15:19 which have been omitted from 15:21 - "Make me like one of your hired men." We cannot speak authoritatively to this issue, but it seems that the weight of evidence is on the side of including these words in verse 21 also.

The son's confession to his father contains an understanding which is not too often mentioned today - when the son suggested the object of his error, he clearly admitted that he had sinned against God as well as his father. This is often overlooked today.

The son understood that he was not worthy to be his father's son; that he had brought embarrassment to the family and did not deserve to be considered as one of them.

Let me comment on the words omitted from the text - "Make me like one of your hired men." He accepted the fact that he had forfeited his right to sonship and did not beg the issue. He was big enough, however, to ask to be considered as a worker. Imagine what that would be like. He would be daily reminded of his error and the embarrassment he had brought upon the family. He would constantly be exposed to the unfortunate glances of members of the family. Nevertheless, he wanted to be in their employment. He was not able to correct his mistakes, but he was willing to pay the price for his error.

Now look back over Luke 15:11-21. So that you could see them at a glance, here is a list of the good and not so good points in the younger son's character.

NOT SO GOOD QUALITIES	THE GOOD QUALITIES
1. Selfish v. 12	1. Honest with himself v. 17
2. Uncaring for father's feelings v. 12	2. Reasonable v. 17
3. Immature - could not delay gratification v. 12	3. Courageous v. 18
4. Irresponsible v. 12	4. Repentant v. 18
5. Rebellious v. 13	5. Admitted sinning against God, father v. 18
6. Wild v. 13	6. Decisive v. 18

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NOT SO GOOD QUALITIES	THE GOOD QUALITIES
7. No future plans v. 13	7. Accepted his responsibility v. 19
8. Insensitive to family, community v. 13	8. Accepted his punishment v. 19
9. Spendthrift v. 13	9. Growing sense of justice v. 19

We must be clear of the intention of the above chart. It is not intended to show that the "prodigal son" was falsely accused. The usual charges were true. It is rather to point out that we have tended to see only the unfortunate side of this young man. We must also note that none of these qualities surfaced until "he came to his senses." He did not suddenly become a saint, but there is an observable difference in his character between when he asked for his inheritance and his conduct when he returned home.

Verse 22 begins with the word "but." This indicates that a strong contrast is in process.

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.'" Luke 15:22

The instruction of the father to the servants put a great stress upon speed. One must ask the question, Why was this so important? There are several possibilities:

1. He may have stressed the urgency of the matter because of his concern over the anguish his returning son may have been feeling.
2. He may have pushed the servants to hurry because he feared what the neighbors might do if they found him before discovering that he had been restored.
3. He may have pushed the servants to hurry because of his own great excitement and eagerness to see his son at peace again.

Though we cannot say for sure, it appears to me that it may be a combination of all three. If one is to be stressed above the others, I would probably choose his great desire to restore his son before the neighbors found out and did his son harm. Whatever the real issue might be, all of them tend to focus our attention on the great compassion of the father for his wandering son.

The father instructed the servants to bring the best robe. The word "best" is probably not our most accurate translation of the word. The Greek word that Jesus used was "protos" "πρῶτος." This word is more accurately translated "first." The word usually translated "best" in the New Testament is "meizon" "Μεῖζων". This is the word Paul used in I Corinthians 12:31 when talking about the "best" gifts. The word "protos" might better be translated "first," or "principle robe." The word that Jesus used does not suggest a garment which is superior in quality to the other available robes. It would be a robe with long very full sleeves and long flowing hem. It would be almost impossible to do any kind of work in such a garment. This garment was symbolic in that it identified the person who was first in rank in the family. The situation in this story, as in the early part of the story of Joseph, deals with the same issue. Jesus must have shocked his listeners when he said that this wandering boy was given the principle robe for the family. That can mean that this robe identifies the heir of the family, but it may also suggest that the wearer just holds a primary position in the family. Whatever the symbol, it is a way of saying that

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this man was important in the family. Jesus was not trying to present a plausible story, but trying to show something of the greatness of the love of God.

Why do you think the father instructed the servants to "bring the best robe and **put it on him?**" It was a way of saying that the son was being received and treated like any other member of the family. Servants would help every member of the family dress for the day. This returning son was to receive no less as far as the father was concerned.

The shock of the father's instructions to the servants was not over.

"Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet." Luke 15:22b

The ring was much more than a piece of expensive jewelry. The ring, or sometimes the pendant, was the authority of the family, the family checkbook; first century plastic. The shock of this instruction was that this was the young man who had squandered his entire inheritance and now the father gives him the family checkbook with no strings attached! Again, Jesus is making it clear that the forgiveness of the father was complete.

The father instructed the servants, who had no shoes, to put sandals on the feet of his returning son. Servants went without shoes. It was an attempt to keep the servants from running away, a way to differentiate between family and slaves. The prodigal returned home without shoes, but his father demanded that shoes be placed upon his feet immediately. There were no limits to what the father will do to make his son feel at home in the family again.

Still the father has not finished.

*"Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate."
Luke 15:23*

These two instructions are related, but not identical. The father instructed the servants to bring the fattened calf and kill it. This was very important because these were not people who ate much meat. It would not be uncommon for them to eat meat only twice in the year - Passover and at a wedding feast. Notice the father instructed them "bring **the** fattened calf and kill it." This was specific because they probably had only one fattened calf and it was probably for the wedding of the older brother. This was a way to say that this meal was at least as important, in the mind of the father, as the wedding of the older son.

The exhortation, was specific, "Let's have a feast and celebrate." The father's words are slightly different in the Greek text.

It says, "and eating, let us be merry." The message is nearly the same. In both instances the father was saying that this was to be a time of rejoicing and celebration.

The father gave his reason for this joyful instruction in the following verse.

"For this son of mine was dead; and is alive again; he was lost and is found." Luke 15:24a

This has been confusing for some people. They wondered if the father meant that his son had been resurrected. That was not the intent of his explanation. Among the strictest Jewish people, both then and now, if a child embarrassed the family, he would be disowned. A funeral would be held and the father would make an announcement that his son was dead. The name of that child would never be mentioned in his house or his presence again. The father was simply saying, "we had to have a funeral for my son

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because he disgraced us. That has all been changed because he has changed and we have reinstated him back into the family again. It is as though the dead has been raised. Jesus makes a second statement that clarifies the father's intent. "He was lost and is found." It means that he had lost his way, but he has returned and his conduct is no longer a disgrace in the family.

Jesus brought the story of the younger brother to a fitting conclusion by saying, "So they began to celebrate." This means that the official symbol of the father's acceptance of his son and the father's declaration of forgiveness of his son had commenced. The boy was no longer considered guilty of humiliating the family.

Obviously the details of the story deal with the life of the younger son. But the real message Jesus was conveying was a description of the love of the father for his wayward son.

15:25-32 - The Father of the Lost Older Son

Many preach and teach about **the** prodigal son. This father had two prodigal sons. It is interesting that the chapter is Divided in such a way to express this understanding. Jesus dealt with the younger son first, but the story of the older son is just as revealing and just as applicable to life as we know it.

Jesus shows His great skill as a storyteller. He finished the story of the younger son and immediately flashed back to the story of the older son.

"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'"
Luke 15:25-27

The fact that Jesus places the older son in the field at a time when the feast would begin is a clear indication that this older son was a hard worker.

These verses give you an idea of what the older son thinks as he discovers what has happened since he went to the field to work. Whatever else was in his mind, the older son experienced confusion. He could hear music and dancing and as the expected host of any such event in his home, why didn't he know about it? Confusion lends itself to anger.

The second piece of information has to do with the surprising return of the one who had been his brother. We must remember that the idea of holding a funeral for the younger brother who had embarrassed the whole family was the action of the father, not the older brother. Always the older brother had done all the work while his brother was living it up must have flooded through his mind. There is resentment to think that the younger brother had the gaul to return after what he had done. The older brother had a right to expect his younger brother to help him with the work, but that did not happen. Now the younger brother had returned.

The idea that the fattened calf had been killed had to be a source of some irritation as well. It is almost certain that this animal was being kept for the older brothers wedding. Now this animal which had been kept for his wedding had been killed to celebrate the return of the one for whom he felt no joy in his coming. The older brother would feel cheated, betrayed by his father and angry with his irresponsible brother.

Jesus describes the older brother's response in careful detail.

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"The older brother became angry and refused to go in." Luke 15:28a

This sentence sounds simple and straightforward. It is far more than it appears to be. According to this text, the older brother's actions were fueled by his anger. He refused to go into the feast. This is very significant. In the Jewish household, whenever the father would prepare a feast of any kind, his oldest son would be the host of the occasion. His anger made it impossible for him to carry out his customary responsibility. In this situation, at least, he was unwilling to carry out the responsibilities of the oldest son. Lest we totally misunderstand, there was a definite reason for his unwillingness to go in to the feast. As we showed earlier, there were four specific ways by which Jewish people symbolized forgiveness:

1. You bring the guilty person into your house.
2. You eat with the guilty person.
3. You share salt with the guilty person. This was a regular part of every meal for them.
4. You kiss the guilty person.

If you look carefully at the story of Joseph, it was not until Joseph had demonstrated all four symbols of forgiveness that his brothers would speak to him. Do you remember the story of Jacob and Laban? Why did Laban chase down Jacob? It was not because he had to have another feast with his daughters and grandchildren. He said he had to have a meal with them, but it was so that Jacob would not leave him in unforgiveness. If Jacob left in anger and unforgiveness, Laban feared that Jacob would return with an army and destroy all that he had. In the story of the father of the lost older son, he refused to go in to the feast because he could not forgive his brother.

Jesus continued with this bazaar story.

"So his father went out and pleaded with him." Luke 15:28b

Again, this sentence seems quite simple. In one sense it is, but there is more. Two things about this sentence would scandalize those who heard Jesus that day:

1. The father went out to his son rather than the son coming to where the father was. It was considered unacceptable for a father to have to go to his son because the son refused to come to him. This would cause local people to have questions about the ability of the father and the quality of character of the son. No one would tolerate such action.
2. The father pleaded with his son. This was scandalous in that society. Go down any supermarket aisle, listen as you sit in any restaurant and you will hear parents pleading with their small children. The parents are trying to get the children to do what the parents want done and it is not going well. It was not that way in biblical times. If a father told his son to do something, that boy should be doing it. It would not be healthy for the boy, from the father's point of view and it would be equally unfortunate for the boy from the community point of view.

Jesus was making a serious point and He did it well. He was showing what God was willing to endure in order to minister to His wandering children. Humiliation was not too

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great a price to pay in order to get His children to do what was required of them. Jesus was telling them who God is, not who the prodigal sons are.

The next segment of the older sons statement would cause eyebrows to raise all over the audience.

"But he answered his father, 'look...' Luke 15:29a

Here again, the statement seems innocuous. To say the least it was not. In that culture, the respect of parents was primary in importance. One of the first ways to show this respect was in the way they spoke to parents. The older brother did not even address his father at all. He just started talking, "Look!..." This would be understood as the epitome of disrespect. The younger brother, on the other hand, though he was guilty of many errors, showed his father ultimate respect when he said, "... **Father**, I have sinned against heaven and against you..." Luke 15:18c.

There is another observation that needs to be made from this verse.

"But he answered his father, 'Look! all these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'" Luke 15:29, 30

These two verses give us some careful insights into the character of the older lost son. He did not serve his father gladly, but out of a sense of force or duty. He spoke with the utmost disrespect to his father. Even the neighbors, in Palestine, would not put up with that kind of disrespect without retaliation.

The older lost son was malicious in his conversation. instead of calling the boy his brother, he referred to the younger brother as "this son of yours." In Palestine, a father would never put up with that kind of abuse from any of his children.

The older lost son publicly challenged his fathers wisdom. This is a total disrespect for his father. Again, a child could well be disowned for this kind of abuse.

The older lost son accused his father of playing favorites when he said that the father would not give him even a young goat, when he had worked so hard, but killed the fattened calf for the wayward brother.

The words of the older lost son were not dependable. He flatly said that his younger had "squandered the fathers property with prostitutes." That may well be the case, but there is no reason in the story to conclude that that is how the money was used. There are many ways that a person can be "Wild" without involving prostitutes.

In all of the things that the older lost son said, it is clear that there is no forgiveness for the wayward brother. The following is a summary of the characteristics of the older brother.

THE NOT SO GOOD QUALITIES	THE GOOD QUALITIES
1. Uncontrolled anger v. 28	1. He was responsible worker- v. 25
2. Resentful of brother v. 28	2. He was a hard worker - v. 25
3. He was unforgiving v. 28	3. He was ambitious - v. 25, 28
4. Disobedient v. 29	4. He was honest v. 28
5. Disrespectful of his father v. 29	

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THE NOT SO GOOD QUALITIES	THE GOOD QUALITIES
6. Uncaring of dishonor he brought his father v. 29	
7. Abusive to his father v. 29	
8. Humiliated his father v. 29	
9. He served grudgingly v. 29, 30	
10. He was malicious v. 30	
11. He publicly challenged his father. v. 30	
12. He believed the worst v. 30	

The father's response was in stark contrast to the abrasiveness of the lost older son.

"My son,' the father said, 'You are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'" Luke 15:31, 32

The father, despite the abusive and abrasive manner of the older son, addressed him in a kindly manner. The father did not accost the son, but tried to explain his decisions.

There is a hint in the text that could be overlooked. The father referred to the older son as "teknon" "τέκνον". The word means "son." There is more to it however. When referring to a grown son a man would usually call him "huios" "υἱός." When speaking of his son who is a child, a man would use the word "teknon" "τέκνον." In a very gentle way, father was saying to his lost older son, you are old enough to be a man, but you are behaving like a little boy.

The father tried to explain the lost older son's position in the family in these words:

"You are always with me, and everything I have is yours. " Luke 15:31b

When the father said, "You are always with me..." He was not saying that the younger son would go away. The father was saying that the older son's position in the family was not diminished. Father was trying to assure his lost older son that his inheritance would not be diminished because the younger son had returned. In retrospect, it is like trying to reassure the first child in a family that he has not been rejected just because a baby brother or sister was born. The overarching feeling in this sentence is one of compassion and concern on the part of the father.

The father continued:

"But we had to celebrate and be glad..." Luke 15:32a

One needs to ask, **Why** was it necessary to celebrate and be glad? No law said it was necessary. The father's intentions, however, demanded a celebration dinner. Father wanted everyone in town to know that his son had been restored, forgiven, welcomed back into the family. Father was going to be just as deliberate about restoring the wayward son to the family as he had been in disowning him. The community couldn't possibly believe such an announcement if they did not see the symbols of forgiveness that the father was performing. They had to be glad because he was a father; because he was overwhelmed at the knowledge that the son who had hurt him so deeply had come home to face him and made a clean face of his errors, without asking for any release from his punishment.

JESUS TEACHES THREE PARABLES ON LOSTNESS

Painstakingly the father explained the reasons, which the lost older son already knew, without any rancor or anger.

"Because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." Luke 15:32b

Oh how gently the father reprimanded his abrasive son! Father could have lectured him about speaking in that tone of voice to his father. Instead, father simply reaffirmed that the younger boy was indeed his son, but he was also this young man's brother because the father had made a decree to that effect and no one could change it. It is as though the father said, "He is your brother! Your brother was dead - his funeral was held and we have not spoken his name in the household or in my presence from that day to this. He was dead. Now he is alive - he is alive because I have reinstated him as my son. He will forever be known as my son and your brother."

"Your brother was lost - he made some choices that broke my heart and destroyed his life. He was lost. Your brother, however has been found - he has changed his direction; he has acknowledged that he was wrong and came back like a man to face me with his confession. Your wayward brother has been found."

Can you read this story without tears in your eyes? I can't! This is your story and mine! The important thing about it is not how far the younger son strayed, but how lovingly the father drew him back into the family.

For some reason, we tend to focus this story on the younger lost son. There is real evidence that the older son was lost; perhaps in a different way, but just as lost. It is more comfortable to look at the sins of those who make no profession of faith in Christ. Jesus reminded us that those who do not wander in such deliberate fashion can be just as lost. The good news is that they have also received the love, patience and gentle love of the Father just as the wandering son received.

Look for a moment at what this story tells you about the father.

THE GOOD QUALITIES	THE NOT SO GOOD QUALITIES
1. He allowed his son to live his own life v. 12	
2. He was concerned v. 20	
3. He was compassionate v. 30	
4. He was trusting v. 20	
5. He was a brave man -took son back v. 22	
6. He was forgiving to both v. 23	
7. He could be reasoned with - set aside ostracism v. 24	
8. He was very gentle v. 28, 31	
9. He was sacrificial v. 28	
10. He was not retaliatory v. 31	
11. He was firm v. 32	
12. He was not punitive v. 31	

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Notice that there is a long list of good qualities in the father, but as far as I can see, there is no mention of a quality that is less than desirable. This is really the story of a merciful father and not the story of one or two prodigal sons.

As you may remember, this chapter began with a question by one of the pharisees. He was asking why Jesus wanted to spend time with the publicans and sinners. Jesus answered the question by showing that these sinners were ultimately important to him and he wanted the Pharisees to know that the publicans that religious leaders considered unforgivable, were quite forgivable in the economy of God.

Think about this chapter for a few moments. This is the whole message of the Gospel. This is the picture of God the Father that Jesus was constantly trying to help people to understand and accept. If Jesus cared that much about the publicans and sinners, even when they were involved in things that were contrary to Him, think how He must love us.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 18

LUKE 16:1-31

JESUS TEACHES THE PHARISEES AND HIS DISCIPLES

1. In our best Greek manuscripts, there are three paragraphs in Luke chapter 16. On the table below, write a summary of seven words or less for each paragraph.

16:1-13	
16:14-18	
16:19-31	

2. In 16:1-13, Jesus tells the story of the dishonest manager.
 - a. Read the story several times. What is Jesus teaching in this parable?
 - b. In 16:8, Jesus said, "**The master commended the dishonest manager.**" Of whom was Jesus speaking when he said, "Master"?
 - c. What did Jesus mean, in 16:8, when He said, "The people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light."?
 - d. In 16:10, 11, Jesus was describing an eternal principle. Think about it carefully. Illustrate the principle in modern terms and situations.
 - e. In 16:13, Jesus gives a principle of life.
 - (1). What is the principle?
 - (2). Illustrate the principle with modern life situations?
3. In 16:14-18, there is an uncomfortable tension between Jesus and the Pharisees.
 - a. What triggered this tension?
 - b. In 16: 14, 15, Jesus made an accusation concerning the Pharisees.
 - (1). What was the accusation?
 - (2). How did Jesus evaluate what the Pharisees were doing?
 - c. In 16:16, 17, Jesus turns the focus of His attention slightly to a consideration of the Law and the Prophets.
 - (1). What does this have to do with the issues in 16:14, 15?
 - (2). What does this have to do with the parable in 16:1-13?
 - (3). What did Jesus mean, in 16:16, where he said people were forcing their way into the kingdom?
 - (4). In 16:17, Jesus talked about the changeless nature of the Law. What does this have to do with 16:14-16?
 - d. In 16:18, Jesus used an illustration involving divorce. What does this have to do with 16:14-17?
4. In 16:19-31, Jesus told a parable about the rich man and Lazarus.
 - a. In 16:19 Jesus tells us about the rich man. List the information Jesus gave us about the man. What does this list say about him?

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

- b In 16:20, 21, however, Jesus gave a contrasting picture of Lazarus the beggar.
(1). On the chart, below, list the contrasting information Jesus gave about both men.

THE RICH MAN	LAZARUS

- (2). What can we learn from this information?
- d. In 16:24, the rich man petitions Abraham.
(1). What does it mean when the rich man called the patriarch "father Abraham"?
(2). The rich man made an impassioned petition. What was his plea? Why would he make it?
- e. In 16:25, Jesus quotes Abraham's response to the rich man's plea.
(1). What was the response?
(2). What difference did it make that while the two men were alive, the rich man had many good things and Lazarus had nothing?
(3). What was Jesus referring to when he spoke of the "Great gulf fixed."?
(4). Why, in 16:25, did Abraham call the rich man "son"?
- f. In 16:27, 28, the rich man pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus, who had been a helpless cripple on earth, to warn members of his family what Hell was like? Why would he do this?
- g. In 16:29, Abraham rejected this request.
(1). Was this refusal cold and calloused?
(2). What was the basis of Abraham's rejection of the plea?
- h. In 16:30, the rich man continues to plead his case.
(1). What was the basis of the rich man's continued petition?
(2). What does this tell you about the rich man?
(3). What does this tell you about the warnings God has made available otherwise?
- i. In 16:31, Abraham gives a final rejection to the rich man's plea.
(1). What was the basis of his refusal?
(2) Are the writings of Moses and the Prophets sufficient warning for people to flee their evil rebellion?
5. Review your study.
- a. What does the parable of the rich man and Lazarus add to the remainder of Luke 16?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 18

- b. How does this huge contrast relate to the use of money discussed earlier in the chapter?
 - c. What was Jesus really teaching the disciples and the Pharisees in this chapter?
6. Reflect on the teachings of Luke 16.
- a. What values does it highlight?
 - b. What demands does it place upon your life?
 - c. What promise does it offer those who obey?

LESSON 18: – LUKE 16:1-31

JESUS TAUGHT THE PHARISEES AND HIS DISCIPLES

Introduction

In our best Greek manuscripts of Luke chapter 16, there are just three paragraphs. They are as follows:

16:1-13	The Parable of the Dishonest Steward
16:14-18	Jesus Taught Pharisees about the Law
16:19-31	The Rich Man and Lazarus

16:1-13 - The Parable of the Dishonest Steward

This is a very difficult passage to interpret because it appears that Jesus is approving a dishonest transaction. This is not so, but at first reading it appears that way.

Jesus told this parable to His disciples. The way Jesus began this parable suggests this was a story, but that it referred to no specific historical situation.

Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.'" Luke 16:1, 2

A manager or steward of a first century wealthy household was usually a slave who had proven himself trustworthy. Because of this, the master gave him complete care of his household or at least this portion of his master's business. Sometimes these slaves were freedmen, but the responsibility was the same. Many wealthy men were absentee landlords. They rented the land to a farmer for a percentage of the crop.

In the text of the parable, Jesus calls this man a "dishonest manager." In the Greek text, however, the word is not "dishonest," but "unrighteous." It is a broader term, but also describes actions repulsive to Jesus.

In this story, the rich man had heard that his manager was wasting his holdings. Because of this information the owner decided to relieve the manager of his position and called him in to settle accounts. Jesus did not say whether the allegations were true or not.

Jesus carefully described the dilemma faced by the manager.

The manager said to himself, "What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg - I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses." Luke 16:3, 4

At this point, Jesus had not identified the plan, but had identified the purpose it was to achieve. The servant was going to ingratiate himself to the people so that they would care for him when he was dismissed from his present position. The manager was caught in a web of his own making, but he was devising a plan to support himself when his options were far fewer.

Notice how carefully Jesus weaves the plot of the story:

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So he called in each of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' 'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' Luke 16:5-7

It was not uncommon for these managers to add a percentage for themselves to the rent for the land. If the rent was 500 bushels of wheat, then the manager might charge the farmer 700 and keep the 200 bushels for himself. Thus if this is what Jesus was referring to, then the cancellation might be only the portion that he had added for his own commission. If so, his error would not be in canceling part of the debt, but the addition of the commission in the first place.

Jesus came to the crucial part of this parable.

The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Luke 16:8, 9

Jesus was speaking. Therefore, when Jesus said, "the master commended..." Jesus was not talking about himself, but about the rich man for whom the manager worked.

Notice also that the master did not commend the man because he was dishonest, but because he was shrewd. The word translated "shrewd" is "phronesis" "φρόνησις" which literally means prudence or practical wisdom in the management of one's affairs. It is possible to commend a person for certain qualities in their lives while being seriously offended by other qualities. That appears to be the case in this instance. Though the owner was distressed because the manager had not served with his best interest in mind, he commended the manager for his prudence and foresight.

This is the end of the story Jesus was telling, but not the end of the parable. Notice the observation Jesus made in verse eight:

"For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. Luke 16:8b

There are some missing words, in this sentence, which are understood. At the end of the sentence, the following words are part of our understanding of what Jesus said, "**in dealing with their own kind.**" Jesus was saying that we could take a page from the book of the unrighteous without imitating their whole lifestyle and values. We need to be as prudent about our future as they are about their selfish, materialistic future.

Jesus follows this observation with an illustration of what He had been talking about.

"I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." Luke 16:9

What appeared to be a parable about looking out for your material future, turns out to be a parable about our use of funds in view of our eternal future. In this parable, Jesus was saying that just as the manager would be terminated in his employment, we are going to come to the end of our earthly stay. We need to be as thoughtful about our future living

JESUS TAUGHT THE PHARISEES AND HIS DISCIPLES

arrangements as the non-Christian people are prudent about their materialistic future. Jesus was saying that the way we use the money and possessions we have now has a definite effect upon what our eternal future will be like. Prudent use of our possessions in the present will guarantee our situation in eternity.

Jesus continued with the theme on the use of funds and possessions.

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?" Luke 16:10, 11

This is a stewardship principle. What we do now has a direct effect upon our eternal future. If God can trust us to use wealth prudently in this world, then He can trust us with eternal possessions in the kingdom of God. The opposite is also true. If we show that we are not dependable custodians of wealth in this life, God will not trust us with even greater blessings in the life hereafter. Dependable custodianship always includes ministering to the needs of the helpless.

Jesus emphasized the idea by means of another example.

"And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?" Luke 16:12

"Someone else's property" is a reference to God. Jesus was saying that if we cannot be trusted with possessions in this life, we cannot be trusted with greater possessions in heaven.

In the closing verse of this paragraph, Jesus states the entire case in succinct terms.

"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You can not serve both God and Money." Luke 16:13

Jesus has returned to the story of the shrewd manager. The manager got into trouble because while serving the concerns of his master, he took time out to put his own interests first. It cost him his job and his livelihood. It is safe to assume that if he had continued to be primarily concerned about his owners concerns, he would not have lost his important position.

Likewise, when people put their love of money ahead of their love for God, only doom can be experienced.

16:14-18 - Jesus Teaches Pharisees about the Law.

This brief paragraph seems to be disconnected from the former one, but in fact it is an outgrowth of it. Read Luke 16:14 and you get an impression of the Pharisee's response to the teaching of Jesus.

*The Pharisees, **who loved money**, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. Luke 16:14*

Luke characterizes the Pharisees as notorious for their love of money and position. Notice that the Pharisees were sneering at Jesus. They felt so superior to Him that they changed the way they put their trust in Jehovah. They sneered at the teachings of Jesus. The word "sneering" is "ekmukterizo" "ἐκμυκτηρίζω" which literally means "to hold up the nose as

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a way of expressing derision." Some translations use the word "scoffing." It was not that they just differed with Jesus. Their thinking was so different that they thought of Him as beside himself. In the idea of sneering there is also the implication of superiority.

The source of the Pharisees' reaction was clear. Jesus had attacked the unwholesome accumulation of money and this was very precious to the Pharisees. It was seen as a personal attack, and it probably was an attack on their values.

Jesus responded to their condescending ways with some carefully directed teaching.

He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight." Luke 16:14b, 15

The Pharisees attacked Jesus because they thought His ideas about money were not only unscriptural, but unworthy of civil response. Jesus carefully evaluated their reaction. He accused them of attempting to justify themselves in the minds of people. He continued by saying that they may accomplish that goal, but God operates by different standards. The thing that may win acclaim from people could be totally objectionable to God. In other words, the attempt to justify themselves in the eyes of people was fruitless. It made no impression on God's rejection of their greedy accumulation of wealth.

Because the Pharisees harkened back to the law as justification for most everything that they did and said, Jesus speaks to the issue of law directly.

"The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law." Luke 16:16, 17

Jesus made an interesting point. He said that for centuries the proclamation of God was couched in the terms of the first five books of the Bible as well as the Prophets. With the coming of John, and his ministry, the proclamation was the good news of the coming of the kingdom of God. The difference was not just a change in the way people measure time - B.C. and A.D. The real difference was in the message that was being preached. There is another way to express this. The Old Testament proclaimed that the Messiah **would** come. Beginning with the ministry of John the Baptist, the message was, the Messiah **has already come**. Redemption has been established in Him.

Jesus continued by describing the response of people to this proclamation.

"Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it." Luke 16:16b

Jesus was attacked so often because he consorted with tax collectors and sinners that He often reminded the self-righteous Pharisees of how eagerly these outcast people responded to the proclamation of the Gospel. This, of course, was totally different from what they saw in the lives of the wealthy and people of high station. Jesus pictured these outcast people as taking the kingdom by storm.

Talking about the Law, Jesus turned their attention to one of the pastimes of the Scribes and religious elite - finding new understandings of the pronouncements of the Law.

"It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the law." Luke 16:17

JESUS TAUGHT THE PHARISEES AND HIS DISCIPLES

This statement was very meaningful for Jewish people. If you change just one little dot or ending of a letter, you can change the entire meaning of a word and thus an idea in the Scripture. Jesus was making it clear the law would not change even one dot despite their debates and interpretations. The Law was fixed and would not change, ever.

Jesus then illustrated what He was talking about by looking at the issue of divorce.

"Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery."
Luke 16:18

The Rabbis were constantly reinterpreting the Law concerning marriage and divorce. The family situation had fallen into disrepute. Divorce had become so common and easily secured that many were simply not getting married at all. There is no statement in the law prohibiting divorce, but the Rabbis had built a whole system of understandings about it. Naturally, there were differing opinions. Some said that divorce could only be secured for adultery. Others interpreted "just cause" to mean that if a woman burnt his supper, the husband could get a divorce without being considered disobedient. The wife, on the other hand, could only get a divorce if her husband was leprous, or an apostate. Jesus was not stating a law so much as He was trying to show what the scholars had done to the law. God intended that a man marry and that it be for life. The Scribes and Pharisees, however, had built up a whole system of understandings about what that meant and in the process totally devastated the meaning God intended. It is to this that Jesus was addressing His remarks. In all of Jesus' remarks about divorce, He constantly focused on the divine intent - that it is for life. He did not become involved in the hairsplitting over what was and what was not "just cause."

16:19-31 - The Rich Man and Lazarus

Again, Jesus taught by means of a parable. There is no indication about where this took place. For lack of a specific statement, we assume that Jesus was teaching the disciples and the crowd as he had been in the earlier parts of this chapter. In chapter 15 the Pharisees accosted Jesus. It is appropriate to think that this audience may be in place for this parable.

The way the parable begins suggests that Jesus was telling a story which had no necessary foundation in fact. Notice that the story is a severe contrast between the indolent, self-indulgent rich and the desperately poor.

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day." *Luke 16:19*

If someone dressed in purple robes, it was an indication that they were very wealthy. The dye for the color purple came from the shells of sea creatures found at the bottom of a bay thousands of miles from Palestine. A fact that could easily be overlooked was that the priests and high religious officials wore such robes.

The fact that he wore clothes of fine linen was another sign of just how wealthy this man was. In a day when all cloth was made by hand, cloth of very fine strands would take much more time and care to make than that which common people could afford.

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Jesus portrayed this man as living in luxury every day. This was contrary to the law. There was no law against wealth, but they were not to eat lavish meals on the Sabbath and they were to work six days. The exceedingly rich did neither.

Immediately Jesus turned to describe the poor man in the story.

"At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores." Luke 16:20, 21

This man was a beggar. This means that he was totally unable to work in any way to sustain himself. It was not that he **would not** work, but he **could not**.

Jesus pictured Lazarus as covered with sores. This would be an agony almost beyond the human ability to endure. In verse 21, Jesus said that the dogs came and licked the sores. This was an image people would understand readily, because it was common for dogs to lick wounds whether their own or others, to promote healing.

Some people understand Jesus' mention of the crumbs as though they were tiny specs of bread that fell from a piece of bread. It was much more than that. The rich were very inventive when it came to lavish ways to show how wealthy they were. Knives and forks had not been invented yet. People used bread as a way to convey pieces of food to their lips. The rich sometimes got food on their fingers while dipping their bread into the bowl. They would take a large piece of bread to use like a towel and then throw it away. It was to this that Jesus referred saying that Lazarus waited for crumbs to fall from the rich man's table.

The scene jumps ahead to the time that the two contrasted men died.

"The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried." Luke 16:22

Notice that Jesus did not mention the fact that the beggar was buried. In the story, however, the rich man was properly buried. Does this mean that one was buried and the other was not? Does it mean that the beggar was carried to Abraham's side without burial, while the rich man was buried? We honestly do not know. We must remember that this is just a story Jesus told to convey a specific spiritual truth. My own impression is that Jesus was saying that the beggar was not buried, but was carried by the angels to heaven.

The contrast between the two men touches every facet of their lives. There is a scandal in this parable. Jewish people thought that wealth was a sign of righteousness. They loved to say that the righteous prospers and the unrighteous suffer. The three friends of Job focused their entire argument on this axiom. They were saying that because he was suffering, this was proof that he had sinned. The poor, hungry, sick beggar went to heaven, but the rich man did not. That would be considered a great scandal.

As Jesus told the story, the scandal increased.

"In hell where he (the rich man) was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side." Luke 16:23

Now Jesus has said it, not just implied the fact that the beggar went to heaven and the rich man, of all things, had gone to hell. This was totally unthinkable for the Pharisees.

Jesus spins out the story to its logical ending.

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"So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'" Luke 16:24

The use of "Father Abraham" was an even more severe scandal. It was unthinkable that a rich Jew would not be taken to heaven; to Abraham's bosom. Nevertheless, that is the way Jesus portrayed this situation.

Notice that the tables have turned. In life the rich man had everything and no pain. In death, in Hell he had nothing but pain. In life, the beggar, however, had nothing but pain, but in heaven he had everything. This is the crux of the story that Jesus is trying to get across to the Pharisees who were so absorbed in their accumulation of wealth.

The picture of Hell being a place of burning was very familiar to the Jew. There was a garbage dump at the southwest corner of Jerusalem. This dump had a foul odor and burned constantly. It was on the edge of the Hinnom Valley and was called Gehenna. This is the word the New Testament uses for Hell. It is the image out of which our understanding of hell has come. Do not misunderstand my intent. I believe that Hell is real. It is not a figment of Jewish imagination as some have suggested.

The irony of the contrast in this paragraph is graphic. The rich man who lacked for nothing, now has not even a drop of water to cool his tongue. The irony is extended by the rich man, whom many call "Dives," which is Latin for "rich." He lacked for nothing but now he was begging Abraham to send the now comfortable Lazarus to bring him relief.

Jesus continued the story with the word "but." This suggests that there is a serious contrast between the request and the response of Abraham which will now follow.

"But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'" Luke 16:25, 26

In this bizarre story, Jesus made strong statements about the significance of our lives here on earth:

1. Our destiny is shaped by our choices and actions here on earth.
2. Our future is the result of these choices.
3. The consequences of these choices are irrevocable when once we have died.
4. In that situation, those who have made poor choices will experience great pain and sorrow.
5. Whatever help may be available, it is only available in this life. There is no help beyond the grave.

Notice that Abraham called this wealthy man "son." The Jews who listened to Jesus would have immediately recognized that Jesus was referring to this rich man as a Jew. To many of those who heard Jesus, the thought of a Jew being in Hell was beyond their comprehension. It was very common, however, for Jesus to scandalize His hearers by the parables He taught.

Jesus continued the parable by telling the response of the rich man.

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"He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'" Luke 16:27, 28

These verses accomplish several things, but one that stands out is the fact that this conversation emphasizes how terrible it is to not be in heaven. The rich man describes this as a "place of torment." It is interesting that Jesus has the rich man plead with Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers. In this statement Jesus is suggesting that there is a bondage in the "place of torment" that is not characteristic of heaven.

The rich man refers to Abraham as "father." This is one more illustration of the fact that Jesus is stressing that this rich man was a Jew. Again, this seems scandalous to the Jews, particularly to the Pharisees.

Jesus, in His masterful way, unravels the parable point by point. He continued the story with this exchange:

"Abraham replied, 'They have Moses, and the Prophets; let them listen to them'." Luke 16:29.

Jesus stressed the fact that this rich man and his family were Jews. Because they had the Law and the Prophets, they had all the information they needed to choose to follow God, to choose to follow righteousness. Just as they had to realize, none of us can claim ignorance. We must confess that we did not use the light, the information that we already have. It is also a way to say that if one takes seriously the messages of Moses and the prophets, you will have all the light you need to make an intelligent choice.

Jesus continued the story with this exchange:

"No, father Abraham,' He said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent'." Luke 16:30

The rich man was quite intense in his request of Abraham. What the man was requesting was that his family receive extra light beyond what is necessary for a choice and beyond what others receive. This would be perfectly in keeping with what the Jews thought of themselves. They thought that they were special and that they should receive special consideration, special light.

Put yourself in the place of the rich man. You will notice that there are emotion and intense desire in his words. It gives us some indication of just how important this was to him.

Jesus intensifies the emotions of this parable in His closing statement. Along with the growing emotion, there is also a sense of futility, of frustration in the tone of the words. It is as though the rich man was batting his head against the wall and he knew it. He had not been willing to listen when he knew what Moses and the prophets said. He is certain that his family will not do differently.

"He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead'." Luke 16:31

The words of Abraham have a tone of finality to them. Jesus, in this story, was talking about Jews. In very forthright ways He points out the fact that though these are Jews, the writings of Moses did not make a difference to them. They were so rebellious against the

JESUS TAUGHT THE PHARISEES AND HIS DISCIPLES

instructions of God that they would not listen if a person should rise from the dead to warn them.

Jesus was talking about the current religious leadership. They had the position, but they did not have the relationship of which Jesus had been speaking.

Nothing can replace people taking the words of Scripture seriously. It appears that Jesus was talking to and about the Pharisees who were right there. His message to them was that their position cannot shield them any more than the wealth of this rich, Jewish man could protect him. They must choose whether to take the invitation of Jesus seriously. Nothing less suffices.

Conclusion

There are two major parables in this chapter - the shrewd manager and the rich man and Lazarus. Each is difficult to interpret. Both are very important to our understanding of the plan of God for our lives.

In the parable of the shrewd manager, Jesus presented the truth about one's fixation with material possessions in quite a different light than we are accustomed to thinking. Ultimately, Jesus is correct. Even unrighteous people know that it is wise to part with one's possessions now so that the future may be secure. We must also realize that it is possible to hold on to every penny and in the end lose it all, having compromised our relationship with God.

In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus spoke very clearly about what wealth can and cannot do for us. In all probability the Pharisees were not excited to hear what He had to say and the same may be true for us. It is very human to trust the tangible and we have not freed ourselves of that view.

As you look at your life, in view of these two strong messages about possessions, what was Jesus saying to you?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 19

LUKE 17:1-37

JESUS HEALS AND TEACHES - KINGDOM OF GOD

1. In our best Greek documents, there are five paragraphs in Luke chapter 17. On the chart below please write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

17:1-4	
17:5, 6	
17:7-10	
17:11-19	
17:20-37	

2. Some people struggle with 17:1, 2 because it seems unfair to punish a person when their disobedience is apparently inevitable. Explain this as you would to a new Christian.
- Luke 17: 3, 4 form a series of "if... then" clauses. What does this do for the message Jesus was conveying in these verses?
 - In 17:3, Jesus said, "If your brother sins, (then) rebuke him..."
 - What do you understand "brother" to mean?
 - "Rebuke" seems harsh and abrasive. Most of us do not respond well to this kind of treatment. How do you understand this instruction?
 - In 17:4 Jesus deals with a person sinning against you seven times in one day and each time comes back and says, "I repent."
 - (1).How would you feel if a person sinned against you 7 times in one day and each time said, "I repent."
 - (2).How would you feel about the person?
 - (3). How would you feel about the persons integrity, and sincerity?
 - (4).How would you feel about your forgiveness of the person after the sixth episode?
3. In 17:5, 6, the disciple requested that Jesus increase their faith.
- In 17:5, Luke refers to the disciples as "apostles." Why would Luke make such a change?
 - In this paragraph, the disciples asked for increased faith, but Jesus does not appear to grant their request.
 - (1). How does Jesus explain His denial?
 - (2).What does commanding a tree/ mountain to go into the Sea have to do with the request for increased faith?
 - What is Jesus really saying in response to their request?
 - In Matthew 17:20, you have a parallel passage. Study the two passages:
 - (1).In what ways are the passages similar?

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- (2). In what ways are the passages dissimilar?
- (3). What difference does it make?
- 4. In Luke 17:7-10, Jesus describes the unprofitable servant.
 - a. He begins the parable with the word "suppose." What does this suggest?
 - b. Jesus asked some questions in 17:7-10.
 - (1). What questions did He ask?
 - (2). What answers did he expect?
 - (3). What was He attempting to teach through these questions?
 - c. Jesus refers to the servants, in 17:10, as "unworthy servants."
 - (1). How do you feel when you read these words?
 - (2). What does Jesus mean by "unworthy?"
 - (3). What was Jesus' purpose in telling this parable?
- 5. In Luke 17:11-19, Luke tells the story of the healing of the ten lepers.
 - a. In this paragraph Luke tells us where the experience took place. This is unusual in the Gospel of Luke. Can you think of a reason for this?
 - b. In Luke 17:13, the lepers referred to Jesus saying "Jesus, Master,". What did this mean to them?
 - c. In 17:14, Jesus instructed the ten lepers to go to show themselves to the priests. Why would He tell them to do that?
 - d. In Luke 17:15, 16, one leper discovered that he was healed and returned "praising God in a loud voice. When Jesus healed the man, why was the man giving praise to God?
 - e. In Luke 17:16, the healed leper threw himself down at the feet of Jesus. What did this mean?
 - f. In Luke 17:16, Luke concludes the sentence saying, "...and he was a Samaritan." What difference would this make?
 - g. In Luke 17:17,18, Luke records Jesus' response.
 - (1). What was His response?
 - (2). What did He mean?
 - h. In 17:19, Jesus told the Samaritan to go because his faith had made him well. What was Jesus talking about?
- 6. In 17:20-37, a Pharisee asked Jesus about the coming of the kingdom.
 - a. What was so important about the coming of the kingdom?
 - b. In 17:20, Luke started the paragraph saying, "**once**, having been asked by the Pharisee..." What does this tell you?
 - c. Make a comparison:
 - (1). What question did the Pharisee ask?
 - (2). What answer did Jesus give?
 - (3). What can you learn from this?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 19

- d. In 17:21, Jesus said, "the kingdom of God is within you." What does this mean?
- e. In 17:22, Jesus said, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it." What did Jesus mean?
- f. Jesus compared the Son of Man to lightning. What did Jesus teach in this parallel?
- g. In 17:25, Jesus also said, "But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation." What did He mean by this?
- h. In Luke 17:26, 27, Jesus drew a parallel between the times of Noah and the days of the Son of Man.
 - (1). In what ways were the two times similar?
 - (2). What does this reference to the times of Noah illustrate?
 - (3). What do we learn from it?
- i. In Luke 17:28, 29, Jesus draws another parallel - the days of Lot and the day of the Son of Man.
 - (1). In what ways are the two times similar?
 - (2). What does this reference to the times of Lot illustrate?
 - (3). What does this reference to Lot add to our understanding of the day of the Son of Man?
- j. Jesus gave two illustrations concerning the day of the Son of Man - the story of Lot and the story of Noah.
 - (1). Why did He use two illustrations?
 - (2). What would we miss if Jesus had used only Noah as an illustration?
 - (3). What would we miss if Jesus had used only Lot as an illustration?
- k. In Luke 17:30, 31, Jesus again uses a simile to describe what the day of the Son of Man will be like. Again, Jesus uses two illustrations - the man on the roof of his house and the man in the field.
 - (1). What did Jesus' statement about the man on the roof of his house tell about the day of the Son of Man?
 - (2). What does Jesus' statement about the man in the field tell about the Day of the Son of Man?
 - (3). What would we miss if Jesus had told us only about the man on the roof?
 - (4). What would we miss if Jesus had told us only about the man in the field?
- l. Jesus begins Luke 17:32 with the strong reminder, "remember Lot's wife?"
 - (1). Why does Jesus bring up the story of Lot's wife?
 - (2). What information does this add to our knowledge of the Day of the Son of Man?
- m. In Luke 17:33, Jesus gives an apparent contradiction.
 - (1). State the principle of which Jesus spoke in Luke 17:32-33, in your own words.
 - (2). What was Jesus trying to say?
- n. In Luke 17:34-36, Jesus gave two illustrations:
 - (1). What are these illustrations?
 - (2). What do they illustrate?
 - (3). What would be different if Jesus had not referred to the two people in bed?

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- (4). What would be lost if Jesus had not referred to the two women grinding?
- (5). What was Jesus saying?
- o In 17:37, the Disciples responded to this teaching of Jesus. They answered with a question:
 - (1). What was their question?
 - (2). What does this tell us?
- p. Look at Jesus' reply in 17:37b.
 - (1). Why did Jesus answer in this way?
 - (2). What did He say?
 - (3). What did He mean?
- 7. Review Luke 17 again.
 - a. What was Jesus saying in this passage?
 - b. How does this apply to the trauma which characterizes the times in which we live?

LESSON 19: – LUKE 17:1-37

JESUS HEALS AND TEACHES - KINGDOM OF GOD

Introduction

In our best Greek manuscripts there are five paragraphs in Luke chapter 17. They are as follows:

17:1-4	The Danger of Being a Stumbling Block
17:5,6	The Disciples Desire Increased Faith
17:7-10	The Unprofitable Servant
17:11-19	The Healing of the Ten Lepers
17:20-37	The Coming of the Kingdom

17:1-4 - The Danger of Being a Stumbling Block

The text suggests that Jesus was now talking to His disciples. That does not mean that this passage immediately follows chapter 16, but it is possible.

This paragraph is difficult for some people because they see a severe philosophical question in verse one.

Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. Luke 17:1

The problem people face can be simply stated, but not so simply answered. They say, If causing people to sin is inevitable, then why will the people through whom these problems come be so severely punished?

The Greek text is helpful at this point. The word translated "cause people to sin" is "skandalizo" - "σκανδαλίζω" The word literally means to put a snare before. It is that part of the trap where the bait was placed, that which becomes a hindrance to others. It is anything that causes others to fall by the way. Stumbling is inevitable because of our human, fallen condition. Some people are willing to teach others to sin.

Jesus was also saying the ones teaching others to sin appear to be getting away with it, but they are not. It would be far better for those persons to have a millstone tied around their necks and thrown into the sea. This was a well known picture to these people. They were not far from what they called the Sea of Galilee. This was also the place where they made most of the grain mills and olive presses. Because of earthquakes and lava flows, there were rich deposits of basalt stone in the area. These massive black stones were excellent raw material from which to make the mill stones. In the city of Capernaum and the surrounding area, excavations have found many of these stones. Two men could not lift such a stone. If a person had one of these tied to him, he would have no chance in the Sea of Galilee. This was a way of warning His hearers to be extremely careful how they deal with people, especially children - both spiritual and physical.

There is a series of "if...then" clauses in this paragraph.

If your brother sins, (then) rebuke him, and If he repents, (then) forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, "I repent," (then) forgive him. Luke 17:3b, 4

The "if . . . then" clause identifies a cause and effect relationship. If this happens, then this will follow.

Jesus said, "If your brother sins, **(then)** rebuke him." Jesus apparently was speaking about one of His disciples when He said, "If your **brother** sins.... There is little reason to believe that He was talking about a member of your physical family.

The word "rebuke" *epitimao* - "ἐπιτιμῶ" means to censure, to reprove, to strongly admonish. This is "tough love. Jesus is suggesting that the rebuke should facilitate the repentance. When the sinning brother repents, changes his mind, turns away from sin and turning toward obedience to God; he should be forgiven. The word "forgive" - "afihmi" - "ἀφίημι" literally means "to send from." It comes from the old sacrificial system that these people knew quite well. On the day of atonement, one goat was sacrificed as a sin offering, that by his blood this person's sins might be covered. The other animal was taken out across the Kidron Valley and driven out into the desert to the south and east of Jerusalem and lost in the desert. It was a symbol of the forgiveness that was theirs in the sacrifice. Just as the scapegoat was driven out of the camp never to be seen again, so the sins of the people were separated from them never to be remembered again. Jesus was saying that we, as His followers, are to separate the repentant brother from his sin as the scapegoat separated the people from the remembrance of their sins.

In 17:4, Jesus gives instruction of how his followers are to deal with a brother who sins repeatedly. He said:

*If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, "I repent," **(then)** forgive him. Luke 17:4*

Jesus was dealing, to some extent, in hyperbolic terms. Is it possible for a person to sin against another single human being seven times in the same day? It is not only possible, but has happened. Most people, however, do not experience this often. Jesus was making a point. This is another "if . . . then" clause; a cause, effect relationship. If the person sins against you seven times in a day and repents; turns away from his sin: **then** we are to forgive that person; to remove the responsibility for that sin from him as the scapegoat removes the awareness of the sin from the lives of the people of Israel.

17:5, 6 - The Disciples Desire Increased Faith

People would say they believe this, but seldom practice it.

The paragraph, in the Greek text, begins with the word "and." In beginning this way, Luke suggests this short paragraph is an outgrowth of if not the next step in the previous paragraph. I look upon it as an outgrowth of the previous paragraph. If that is true, then it is important to show how it is an outgrowth of the previous paragraph. 17:1-4 deals with the forgiveness of a brother who sins; even one who sins repeatedly and asks to be forgiven. It takes great faith to forgive a person repeatedly, especially for the same wrong. It takes great faith not to judge the person by saying that they could not be serious about their repenting if they continue to commit the sin. We need to remember that this is exactly what we ask and receive from Jesus, sometimes on a daily basis.

Luke speaks of them as "apostles." The word "apostle" literally means "to send from"; it is one sent from another to represent the sender's person or interests. This is a royal image. The king sends those who represent him to other kings. Luke's reference to the 12 as "apostles" was apparently the way in which they were identified at the time of the

writing. Luke refers to "the twelve" as apostles on six occasions, while Matthew and Mark each refer to them in this way only once.

The apostles made a request they considered legitimate.

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" Luke 17:5

The request was clear and possible. Jesus answered their petition, but not in the way that they expected. Observe how He responded:

He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you." Luke 17:6

Though Jesus did not use the words, He was saying that the problem was not an insufficient amount of faith. Jesus spoke of the faith the size of a mustard seed. This seed was one of the smallest seeds of which they knew. He told them that even minuscule amounts of faith could achieve miraculous returns - uprooting and planting a tree in the sea. In other words the supply of faith was not their problem. Whether it was a mulberry tree, as our text suggests, or a sycamine tree, as the Greek text suggests, the problem was the use of the faith they already possessed.

If you look at the parallel passage in Matthew, the statement is a bit different, but the intent is identical. Matthew tells the story in connection with the failure of the disciples to be able to heal the boy following the transfiguration. He reports the incident, but he says it in this way:

He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." Matthew 17:20

Mark, on the other hand, tells the story, in Mark 11:23, in connection with the discovery of the dead fig tree. He also speaks of moving the mountain.

The correction of their understanding was as important as meeting the need which seemed so heavy upon them at this time.

17:7-10 - The Unprofitable Servant

We should note that this discourse concerning the unworthy servant immediately follows the disciple's request for increased faith. Is it possible that Jesus inserted this paragraph at this point to remind the disciples that even if they were great men of faith, they would still only be doing what God expected them to do?

Jesus continued His response with an illustration in the form of a parable. Notice how He begins:

Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to

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do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'
Luke 17:7-10

Beginning with the word "suppose," Jesus was suggesting that this was a story, not the record of an actual event. This parable, also, would have been a shock to the disciples. No one would even think in these terms, much less say it.

There are some cultural expressions in this parable that need our attention. Jesus is talking to His disciples about people of wealth. Some disciples, Peter, Andrew, James and John for instance, knew what it was like to have servants. The rest had probably seen this, but may have had no personal experience with slaves in their household.

Servants existed for the comfort of their masters. Disciples exist for the accomplishment of their teachers will. As happened so often, Jesus scandalized His audience to get a point across. The scandal has to do with Jesus' suggestion that the master serve his servants. It was the task of the servant to see to his master's supper whether the servant was fed or not.

It appears that Jesus was saying that the purpose of the twelve was not to become spiritual giants for personal reasons. They were to become increasingly effective servants who lived to serve their master to the limits of their ability.

The nature of Jesus questions shows that these were situations with which they were quite familiar. The expected answer to this question would be, "Naturally not!" His next question is of the same nature, but from the opposite perspective. "Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink?'" The expected answer to this question would be, "Certainly he would!"

Jesus uses the same kind of questions, but changes the direction slightly. Notice the question He asked:

Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do?"
Luke 17:9

The expected answer to Jesus' question would be "never!" Everyone would know that and most would agree wholeheartedly.

At this point Jesus changed the direction and instead of pointing out thoughts and feelings everyone would know, He drew a simile for them from the well known information.

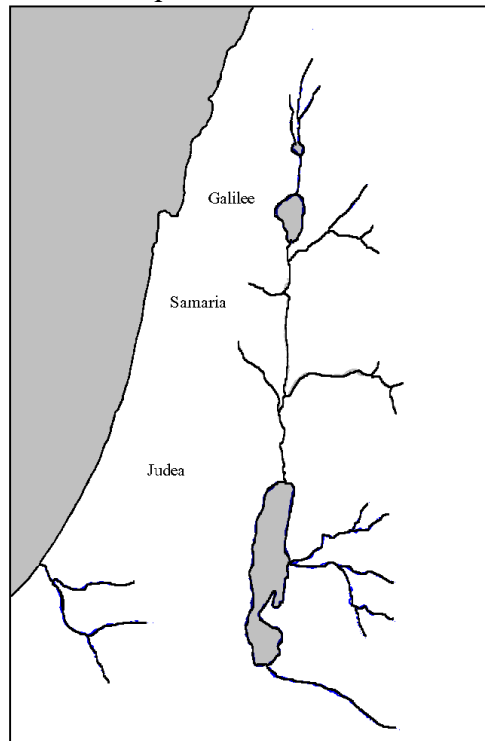
"So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"
Luke 17:10

It appears that Jesus is again pointing to the request made by the disciples asking Jesus to increase their faith. It is another way of saying that increasing faith is expected of a disciple. It is only fulfilling the requirements of their task, not something above and beyond the call of duty.

Jesus was talking about an attitude about oneself. Rather than thinking of ourselves as spiritual giants, we should think of ourselves as nothing special when we have done all that we were asked to do. That is just what was expected of us.

17:11-19 - The Healing of Ten Lepers

This report is not contained in either Matthew or Mark. It is not surprising that Luke gives us a careful insight into the medical experience involved in this story. Luke does not tell us if this experience immediately follows the one which preceded it. It is possible that it did, but not necessary. It is noteworthy that Luke identifies the location of this experience. This is important because Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem to confront the Pharisees and ultimately to be crucified. It appears that this is the reason for the identification of the location. The map which follows will show the location.



This is a bit unusual for Jesus. The route described in 17:1 was the route often followed by Jews going from Galilee to Jerusalem, but it is not the route that Jesus usually followed. He often went through Samaria, much to the discomfort of His disciples.

It is entirely possible that Jesus chose to go this way because of the possibility of confrontation with officials if He had gone His usual direction. We cannot be sure.

Notice the careful description of the event given us by Luke:

As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" Luke 17:12, 13

Luke does not tell us if this is all that the lepers said. If it was the total conversation, then they violated the law by not crying out "unclean! Unclean!" Luke does not tell us about this. We can only assume that these requirements had been met. Luke makes it clear that they did remain at a distance from other people as the law required. To converse with Jesus, the ten men called out in a loud voice as they were required to do. Notice that they addressed Jesus as "Master." Does this mean that they were disciples? The word that they used was not the one usually used by the disciples, "kurios" - "κύριος." They used the word "epistates" - "ἐπιστάτης" which means "chief, master, overseer." This term is

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found only in Luke's account. It was used by the disciples to describe Jesus' authority when they were not identifying Him as their teacher. We cannot say with certainty, but there is good reason to believe that they were at least identifying Him as the one who had power over them, if not their master. We recognize that not everyone who used the word "Lord" was a disciple. On the other hand, it was a favorite way for His disciples to address Him.

Luke speaks of these ten men as lepers. In earliest times, the word "leper" was used to describe a person with one of several diseases - Psoriasis - with a skin eruption which was rough and scaly. Later the word was used to identify the dreaded disease leprosy.

The lepers pleaded with Jesus to have pity on them. The word pity has lost some of its meaning and is often considered a demeaning term or condition today. In the Greek text the word was "eleeo" - "ejleejw" which suggests "being compassionate, to be gracious, to show gracious favor." It is interesting that this Greek word is an imperative; stated as a command, though it may not have been received in that light.

In Luke 5, Jesus reached out and touched the leper and pronounced him clean. That is not what He did in this instance. Look at what Jesus said:

When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. Luke 17:14

Seeing torment and pain moved Jesus to action. That should be significant for us. Jesus instructed the ten lepers to go show themselves to the priests because it was the command of the Scriptures. Leviticus 14:2, 3, give careful instructions to the people who had leprosy and to those who worked with lepers. The priest was the one who pronounced the person unclean or clean. It is important to notice that Jesus treated the laws of the Old Testament as totally binding upon Him and the people with whom he was observing these instructions. Jesus came to fill the law up to the top. He did not view this as exempting Himself, or those whom He taught and healed, from a single instruction of the law.

Observe that they were not immediately healed. They were not healed until they started to obey the instructions of Jesus. Their healing took place as lepers started toward the place where a priest could check them to see if they were indeed cleansed. In the midst of their obedience, they were healed. This was not surprising. In the story of the Red Sea crossing, the priests had to wade out into the water before the waters were rolled back. Nothing releases us from stepping out on faith, from taking God at His word.

Significantly, Jesus healed these men on His way to the confrontation with the Pharisees at Jerusalem. The ability to heal leprosy was one of the marks of the Messiah. Here He healed not only one man, but ten.

Luke continues with the story:

One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him - and he was a Samaritan. Luke 17:15, 16

Remember that this event took place near a village along the border between Samaria and Galilee. Consequently, it is reasonable that some lepers were Jewish and some Samaritan. You will also remember that ten lepers were healed. Certainly, all of the lepers noticed that they had been healed. All 10 lepers had the same responsibilities.

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Luke reminds us that the cured Samaritan leper not only returned, but also was praising God in a loud voice. He was excited about what happened to him and he was well aware of the fact that this was An act of God.

The healed leper threw himself at the feet of Jesus and thanked Him. Throwing oneself at the feet of another was a symbol of servanthood. It is a way of saying, "I am your servant to command and I will obey."

The word for "thank" is "eucharistia" "eujcaristiva." This is a compound word which can be translated in this way: "eu" means "well." "caristia" means "to give freely." It is the word from which we get the English word "Eucharist, or communion." It is a time when we give God great thanks for the redemption that is ours in Jesus Christ. This represents a depth of thanksgiving that the healed leper gave to Jesus.

Luke adds, as in severe shock, "And he was a Samaritan." This would be an honest response among the Jews. They thought of the Samaritans as dogs, but not as obedient to God. Jesus has portrayed this Samaritan as grateful to God when the Jews in the same circumstances showed no gratitude at all. The Samaritans were thought of as worse than Gentiles. They were half-breeds; Jewish people who had married gentiles brought in by their captors. The Jewish people thought these people had forsaken their covenant relationship with God. The Samaritans were called "dogs" by the Jews, and usually treated the same way.

By this time in the parable, the Jewish people who were listening were probably getting very uncomfortable. They would not be too sure that they wanted to see what was going to happen next.

Jesus asked a most uncomfortable question.

Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return to give praise to God except this foreigner?"
Luke 17:17, 18

An appropriate response to being healed of leprosy was certainly to give thanks to God. Yet nine of the ten, perhaps all of them Jews, failed to do that very thing. Jesus said His words in shocked surprise, "Where are the nine?" It is as though He could not believe their lack of gratitude. The extent of His disbelief really shows in His next remark:

Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"
Luke 17:18

Were this anyone else, we would call it shocked disbelief. Jesus knew the fact, but He struggled believing that it could possibly be true.

Some have wondered about Jesus' use of the word foreigner. It is used in a manner that is almost a racial slur, but it is not. The word "foreigner" is "allogenaes" - "ἀλλογενής." It is a compound word:

1. !Allo"" - other
2. "gevno" " - progeny, family

It was a way of saying that we are not of the same family or race of people. It did identify people whose pedigree was different from the Jews, but it was not said in condescension. Jesus was making a point to the Jews who listened, rather than making fun of the lineage of the Samaritans. Jesus knew that the Jews made a lot of fun about the lineage and

heritage of the Samaritans. In this instance, the comparisons were not complimentary to the Jewish people involved. It is like saying, this person is not even one of us and yet he does better than we do at things that we think of as uniquely ours.

Jesus had made his point. He now turned His attention to the Samaritan who had given thanks for being healed. Jesus said,

Then he said to him (the healed Samaritan), "Rise and go; your faith has made you well." Luke 17:18

Jesus really shocked His hearers. These people would never concede that the Samaritans were people of faith. That is precisely, however, what Jesus was saying to this crowd. In His statement about the healed lepers faith, Jesus was saying at least two things. First, Jesus said that the healed Samaritan was a man of faith. Secondly, this man of faith had so focused his faith on Jesus that in response to his healing, he placed himself at the disposal of Jesus as a servant. He gave God great thanks for what had been done for him.

Jesus could have taken the man at his word and accepted him as a servant for life. Jesus chose rather to send him back to live his life in the community.

*Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."
Luke 17:19*

Jesus attributed the man's healing to his faith; he expected Jesus to heal him.

We must wonder what happened to the other nine lepers who were healed. They apparently did what Jesus commanded them to do as far as the priest was concerned. One wonders, did these men remain clear of their dreaded disease? Did they continue in the way Jesus had prepared for them? Just how did these people live in the reprieve from a horrible death that Jesus made possible for them? We really do not know.

17:20-37 - The Coming of the Kingdom

It is difficult to deal with this paragraph because of the way some people have misused it. There will probably always be someone who will be an embarrassment to the church because of their indefensible claims and abuses. We must remind ourselves that by silence we defeat our own cause and stand.

We should keep in mind that Luke gave a very general period for this experience. He said,

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come visibly, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you. Luke 17:20, 21

Jesus replied in such a way that He gave us some very important information about how to identify the kingdom and how it functions.

The Pharisees had betrayed their real lack of knowledge concerning the kingdom of God. This was startling because people knew these men for their accurate knowledge of all things about God.

Jesus began His answer by describing what the kingdom of God is and what it is not.

JESUS HEALS AND TEACHES - KINGDOM OF GOD

*The kingdom of God does not come visibly, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you.
Luke 17:20b, 21*

The Pharisees dealt with the kingdom as something that they could see and evaluate in a test tube. Jesus clarified this by saying that it would not come visibly; they couldn't see or handle it. Pharisees thought of the kingdom of God in much the same terms as any other kingdom. It can be identified and located. Jesus taught them that the kingdom could not be located like a political entity.

Having said what the kingdom of God was not, Jesus then taught them what it was. He began by saying that the kingdom of God is within the person, or in the midst of the faithful, not a political entity like any other nation. You identify a kingdom by defining its borders and identifying its leader. This kingdom, however, has no national borders because it resides within the disciple, or in the midst of the people of faith.

To discover this kingdom, therefore, one must scrutinize the conduct and values of the person or persons in whom it dwells rather than looking for political characteristics to identify.

If the kingdom of God is within us and our fellowship, then it is appropriate to look carefully at the qualities and values of our lives. We must see if they display qualities which are characteristic of God's kingdom. Only in this manner can the kingdom of God be identified.

Having dealt with the identification of the kingdom, Jesus continued by teaching the disciples about the question that had been raised. Jesus was clearly talking about events which were in the future of that time.

Then he said to his disciples, 'The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. Men will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. Luke 17:22-25

There are several pieces of information that one can evaluate to gain new insights. Whatever else Jesus is saying to the disciples, the times He described are in some sense future.

Jesus does not explain what He meant by "one of the days of the Son of Man, . . . " Whatever that may be, Jesus made it clear that they would not visually see that day. He continued by saying that other people will claim to know the location, saying "here it is!" Jesus clearly says that their notions will be false. They will not know where it is. Jesus warns disciples not to go after these people, no matter how appealing it is to be able to see that day.

Jesus gave a simile, as He often did when trying to describe something that was beyond the scope of His hearers. Jesus said the day of the Son of Man will be like the lightning. These people knew about lightning. They had seen it year after year as it lit up the sky from one end to the other. Two features about lightning stand out. 1. It is not localized. It was visible all over the sky. 2. It came suddenly. A distinguishing feature about lightning was its suddenness.

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The next sentence, 17:25, begins with the word "but." This is an indication of a strong contrast. Jesus moves from considering events which will come one day to a careful description of events that will happen during the lives of these people in this place.

*But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.
Luke 17:25*

Jesus was announcing, in advance, two things that were going to happen. These people could confirm the accuracy of His prediction.

1. The Son of Man would have to suffer many things.
2. The Son of Man would have to be rejected by this generation.

The critical issue here is that these things would involve the life of Jesus. In so doing Jesus identified Himself as that Son of Man. These people were asking for the identification of an event, but Jesus was describing a person, Himself, for them.

In 17:26-29, Jesus gives them two illustrations which should help them understand what He was saying to them.

The first of these illustrations/similes deals with the life of Noah.

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. Luke 17:26, 27

The words "just as" do not appear in the Greek text. That text begins with "and as" In either instance the sentence is a series of "as . . . so" clauses. This is a way of drawing a strong comparison of something well known with another that is not well known. Everyone who listened knew the story of Noah quite well. Life was going on as usual - eating, drinking, getting married, all of the normal experiences of life were happening. In the midst of this, God, through Noah, had been warning the people that the flood would come. Suddenly what Noah had promised did happen. It was so sudden that no one could at that point make provision for escape. There are several things that Jesus used from the story of Noah to describe what that day of the Son of Man would be like.

1. Adequate warning had been given repeatedly. That was what Jesus was doing at this very time.
2. Life was going on normally and this tended to make the people suspicious of the prediction that Noah made and that Jesus repeated.
3. The prediction finally came true. Jesus said, it is going to come true again.
4. The predicted events were catastrophic and Jesus was predicting that these would be also.
5. The catastrophic events would surprise everyone.

Jesus used a second simile to convey His message to His disciples.

It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire

*and sulphur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.
Luke 17:28, 29*

Jesus begins this simile with the statement, "it was the same in the days of Lot." It was His way of saying that the circumstances were the same. We need to ask ourselves a question. If the circumstances are the same, then why was it necessary for Jesus to repeat what He had already said, just using a different illustration? The answer is found in their knowledge of the Law. The Law had a definite procedure for determining truth.

*On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but
no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.
Deuteronomy 17:6*

Knowing this statement of the Law, Jesus usually gave two passages of Scripture to verify the things that He taught from Scripture.

In this second illustration, the people of Sodom were busy with the ordinary things of life - "eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting building." There was every reason to believe that life was following its normal, prosperous path; that nothing untoward was in the offing. Nevertheless, the day Lot left the city, tragedy struck suddenly, and without warning. The peaceful, normal pace of life was instantaneously interrupted by devastation and destruction such as they had never seen. This, of course, was one of the facts that Jesus was trying to convey about the Day of the Son of Man. The change came with unexpected quickness, bringing total devastation. This, of course, was the same situation in the experience of Noah.

Having given two illustrations of the suddenness and devastation of the coming of the day of the Son of Man, Jesus now moves to some exhortations concerning that day.

*It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day
no one who is on the roof of his house with his goods inside, should go
down to get them. Likewise no one in the field should go back for
anything. Luke 17:30, 31*

Having reemphasized that this day would be like the day of Noah and Lot in its suddenness and devastation. Jesus spoke of the day "the Son of Man is revealed." The word "revealed" is "apokalupto" - "ἀποκαλύπτω" which means to remove the cover. It is an apocalypse, a revelation as the book of Revelation claims to be. It is to remove the veil of darkness and expose it to the light of understanding. It is an exposing of truth to critical understanding. This is what Jesus was attempting to do.

Jesus now offers some exhortations about how to deal with this awful day. Jesus spoke of two scenarios with which every person who listened would understand perfectly.

He spoke first of the person on the roof of his house. In the late afternoon and evening, people of that area resorted to the roof of their houses to benefit from the cool winds that were common in the area. The evening meal was served there and the family often slept there through the entire dry, hot season of Summer.

Jesus was saying to these disciples, if this startling event occurs while you are on the roof of your house, as you would probably be on a hot afternoon in Summer, you do not have time to stop and get valuables out of your house. These houses had two stairways to the roof - one from inside and one from outside. Jesus was saying you may have time to

escape by the outside steps, but you do not have time to go down into the house and rescue valuables. It is time to escape with your life and be happy to do so.

Jesus chose a second example - those in the field. Again, this would be a very familiar scene for all of those who listened to Jesus. Unlike American farms, the fields that a farmer owned would probably be some distance from where he lived. Jesus' concern was not just that the person did not have time to get from the field to the adjacent farmhouse. He was saying you do not have time to travel the few miles from your field to your home. The urgency is too great. Whatever you have with you is all that you can save. Take what you have and flee for your life.

Jesus closes these exhortations with a reminder.

17:32a - Remember Lot's wife!

As you remember the story, from Genesis 19:26, Lot and his family were told to flee and not look back. Looking back involved more than turning the head in the direction of Sodom. It meant that they should not be preoccupied with the lavish belongings that they had in Sodom. They should just flee for their lives. Lot's wife was fond of the luxurious things and lifestyle that they had in Sodom. She was going to miss it a lot. She was disobedient in two ways. She turned her head in the direction of Sodom and was turned to a pillar of salt. There was another form of disobedience involved. She turned both her eyes and her longing heart toward Sodom. Having thus disobeyed she was punished by being turned into a pillar of salt.

Why did Jesus remind them of Lot's wife? He was using this as a warning that they should not be so enamored of their own earthly possessions and luxurious belongings. They could be tempted to either go into their home and rescue valuables. They could return from their fields to retrieve their valuables at the cost of their lives. It is just one more way to emphasize just how dangerous and threatening the coming of this day will be.

Jesus was not finished. He will now use other expressions to emphasize just what that night will be like.

Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. Luke 17:33

The word "life," as used here, is "soul" in our best Greek texts. "Soul" - psuche "ψύχε" is difficult to translate and understand. In several New Testament passages the word for soul is associated with the emotions. In others the soul identifies the spiritual concerns of a life. If Jesus had intended to speak of just the life, he could have used the word zoe" - "zwhj." Whatever else Jesus had on His mind, He was referring to more than breathing.

The statement in Luke 17:33 seems like a contradiction. It is not. Jesus was saying that if your lifestyle is foremost in your concern and values, it may cost you your life itself. On the other hand, if there is something, namely God, which is more important than life, then you stand a good chance of keeping the life. This is one more emphasis on the importance of forgetting about your belongings and fleeing for your life.

Jesus has not finished. He still wanted to share some information that would be helpful to them.

*"I tell you, **on that night** two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left." Luke 17:34-36*

In these verses, Jesus adds significantly to the information that He had given them. First, Jesus mentions two possible time designations. He speaks of "on that night." The intent of these words is clear. It is very possible that this devastating event will take place at night. The second time designation is less direct. Jesus said, "two women will be grinding grain together." This was not an occupation for the night hours, but for the morning. Previously in this discourse Jesus had given two other time designations. He spoke of being on the roof. This probably refers to early evening, but could refer to any time during the night. Jesus also mentions being in the field. This probably refers to either early morning or late afternoon. They tried to stay out of the fields during the heat of the day. Jesus is not giving conflicting information. He is saying that it could be at night; it could be in the morning, afternoon or evening. It is a way of saying that there is no way to be certain about when this will take place. That is part of the suddenness associated with this devastation.

Jesus continues with His explanation. He mentioned two intimate experiences to give us added insight. He spoke of the very intimate situation - "two people will be in one bed." In preparation for this event, we must not allow ourselves to lean on those most intimately associated with us. We might have done so the hope that their spiritual preparation will avail for us as well. Jesus was saying that will not work.

The second, less intimate, picture was that of two women grinding grain together. This was a common picture in that part of the world. The inference is clear. Two people may keep company. It does not mean that one can count on the spiritual preparation of the other to benefit them. One needs to be as prepared for the coming of the Lord as for the preparation for the coming of physical dangers.

Notice that Luke 17:36 is missing from your text if you are using the New International Version. Only one major Greek document contains this verse. Based on the evidence, it is possible that the original manuscript contained this verse, but it is far more likely that it did not. The words contained in some lesser documents are these:

Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.
Luke 17:36

One must say that both in style and content this verse parallels verses 34 and 35. If, however, you omit verse 36, nothing is lost that is not already present in verses 34 and 35. The message that verse 36 contains is precisely the message Jesus was teaching in the two previous verses.

The disciples listened and then responded to what Jesus had taught them. Their question suggests how well they understood what He had taught.

Where Lord? They asked. Luke 17:37a

The Pharisees asked Jesus "when" this would come. Jesus took the time to explain to His disciples that the important thing was not to discover "when" but that they should make certain that they were ready.

The disciples apparently did not hear Him well. They immediately turned around and asked the next unimportant question, "Where?"

As if they had not missed His point altogether, Jesus answered this question as well. Notice how He used an indirect answer to force them to think about what he had said.

*He replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather.
Luke 17:37b*

Clearly, Jesus could have given a specific, direct answer and there would have been no question about it. That was not the way of a Jewish Rabbi. They prefer to give an answer in such a way that the person must think on it before they understand what the Rabbi has said. This is still one of their favorite means of teaching.

What did Jesus mean by His statement about the dead body and the vultures? As has happened so often in Jesus' teaching, he chose something they knew very well to illustrate and describe something they did not understand at all. This is again the case. All of the disciples had seen dead animals fall and within a short time the vultures came. Some texts translate it "the eagles" come quickly to feast on the body. In effect, Jesus said that those who were not prepared for the coming of the Son of Man would be left in the bed or at the grinding stone.

Some have wondered aloud if this verse was not a hint that the Romans, symbolized by the eagle, would come to Jerusalem, a place where there were many who had not taken the idea of spiritual preparation seriously; a place where there were many who were spiritually dead carcasses. There is not sufficient evidence to make such an assertion dependably. It is an interesting idea.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at several areas of serious concern:

1. The danger of being a stumbling block
2. The need for increased faith
3. The danger of being an unrighteous servant
4. The need for thanksgiving
5. The danger of not being ready for the judgment.

Each of these areas can affect your life and mine in specific ways. It is not surprising that the intensity of the issues increases as Jesus comes nearer and nearer to the time when he will make His final confrontation with the spiritual leaders who were less than spiritual.

One finds himself forced to look at his own life as he considers these serious issues. At what point in my life have I been in danger of facing the issue of being a stumbling block? To what extent does this warning apply to me specifically?

Which one of us is satisfied with the level of our faith as expressed in what we seriously expect to see God accomplish in the difficult experiences of everyday?

Have we ever thought well of our service, thinking that we were doing all that we could; all that God expects of us? What a frightening thought!

On any given day God showers more blessings upon our lives than we could ever take time to identify. How seriously do we face the danger of accepting the miracle God brings to our lives as though it were nothing?

If we really thought that Jesus would come before this day was over, Just how would we use the remaining hours of this day preparing ourselves for that eventuality?

We would do well to think seriously on these things!

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 20

LUKE 18:1-43

JESUS TEACHES; HEALED BLIND MAN

1. In our best Greek manuscripts there are seven paragraphs in Luke chapter 18. On the table below write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

18:1-8	
18:9-14	
18:15-17	
18:18-23	
18:24-30	
18:31-34	
18:35-43	

2. In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus tells the story of the judge and the persistent widow.
- Luke tells us, in 18:1, that the purpose of this parable was "to show them that they should always pray and not give up." With this in mind, read 18:1-8 again. How does this awareness affect the message of the parable?
 - How did Jesus characterize the judge?
 - How did Jesus characterize the widow?
 - Read the parable again with these characteristics in mind. What did you discover?
 - What conclusion can we draw from Jesus' teaching in this parable?
3. In 18:9-14, Jesus teaches the well known parable of the Pharisee and the publican praying.
- In 18:9, Jesus explains the purpose for telling this parable. What does this parable say about the purpose that was announced in 18:9?
 - On the chart below, list the things Jesus said about the Pharisee and the publican. What can we learn from this information?

PHARISEE	PUBLICAN

- There is a strong contrast, in this story, between the Pharisee and the publican. (1). What contrasts can you find?

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- (2) What did you learn from this information?
- d. If you were a Pharisee listening to this parable, what would you think?
- e. If you were a publican listening to this story, what would you think?
- 4. In Luke 18:15-17, mothers brought their infants to Jesus.
 - a. The text does not say, but why do you think the disciples would want to keep these women and their babies away from Jesus?
 - b. In 18:16, Jesus makes a statement about the Kingdom of God. What was Jesus saying about the Kingdom of God?
- 5. In Luke 18:18-23, Jesus told the story of the "Rich young ruler."
 - a. Does the text say the man was rich?
 - b. Does the text say the man was young?
 - c. Does the text say the man was a ruler?
 - d. What question did this man ask?
 - e. What was Jesus' response?
 - f. Why did Jesus respond with this question?
 - g. When Jesus spoke of the law, in 18:20, He recited only a few of the ten commandments.
 - (1). Why was he selective?
 - (2). Why would He choose to mention these five commandments?
 - h. Study the man's response in Luke 18:21.
 - (1). Is it possible for this to be true?
 - (2). Is there any reason to believe Jesus accepted the man's claim?
 - i. Study Jesus' response to the man's claim, in Luke 18:22.
 - (1). Jesus spoke of the man as lacking one more thing. What was it?
 - (2). Why would Jesus want the man to sell his belongings and give the proceeds to the poor?
 - (3). There is a promise attached to the instruction in Luke 18:22. Why would Jesus include this promise?
 - (4). Jesus closed this instruction with a second exhortation - "Then come, follow me." What does the "follow me" have to do with selling your goods and giving it to the poor?
 - (5). Luke 18:23 records the rich man's sad response to the exhortation of Jesus. What does that response tell you?
- 6. In Luke 18:24-30, Jesus comments, at great depth, about the issues involved in the previous paragraph.
 - a. In 18:24, 25, Luke records the response of Jesus to the rich man's choice.
 - (1) What was Jesus' emotional response?
 - (2). How did Jesus explain what had happened in this sad encounter?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 20

- (3). In 18:24, 25, Jesus used a word picture involving a "camel" and "the eye of a needle." Aside from whether these were literal or figurative, what was Jesus saying by this picture?
- b. In 18:26, those who heard Jesus' teaching responded with a startling question:
 - (1) Why would they ask **this** question?
 - (2). What are some of the implications of this question
- c. In 18:27, Jesus responded to their question.
 - (1) Did Jesus answer the question?
 - (2). What answer did Jesus give?
 - (3). What did He mean by that answer?
- d. In 18:28, Peter responded to Jesus' answer. What does "We have left all we had to follow you" have to do with what Jesus had been saying?
- e. In 18:29, 30, Jesus responded to Peter's announcement.
 - (1). What promises did Jesus give Peter?
 - (2). To whom do these promises apply?
 - (3). What did He mean by these promises?
- 7. In Luke 18:31-34, Jesus talks again about His coming death.
 - a. This little paragraph seems to have little to do with the previous paragraph. Look at the two paragraphs again. How does 18:24-30 relate to 18:31-34?
 - b. Why would Jesus teach 18:18-30 to a large mixed group-, but take His disciples aside to teach them 18:31-34?
 - c. This paragraph is not the first time Jesus talked with His disciples about His coming death. In what ways are these statements about His death different from His previous statements about this subject?
 - d. In 18:34, Luke tells us that the disciples did not understand what Jesus said.
 - (1) Luke tells us the meaning was hidden from them. What possible benefit could this provide?
 - (2) If you were a disciple and Jesus said these shocking things you did not understand, how would you feel?
- 8. In 18:35-43, Jesus encounters a blind beggar in Jericho.
 - a. Compare the events of 18:35-37 with the blind man's cry in 18:38, 39. What did you observe?
 - b. The blind man called out to Jesus in 18:38 and again in 18:39. Study these two cries. What do they tell you about this blind man?
 - c. In 18:39, Luke tells us, "those who led the way rebuked him."
 - (1). Who are these people?
 - (2). Why would they rebuke him for what He said?
 - d. Read again 18:40, 41.
 - (1). Why would Jesus insist that they bring the blind man to Him?

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- (2). Why would Jesus ask "What do you want me to do for you?" when Jesus could see that the man was blind and Jesus, as God, was all-knowing?
- (3). In 18:41b, the blind man called Jesus "Lord." What are the possible implications of this fact?
- (4). Put yourself in the place of the blind man when he said, in 18:41, "Lord, I want to see." What would you be feeling at that time?
- e In 18:42, Jesus responded to the blind man's request.
 - (1). Jesus exhorted the blind man, "Receive your sight..." If you were the blind man, how would you obey that exhortation?
 - (2). Jesus said, "Your faith has healed you." What do you understand this to mean.
- f. In 18:43, Luke describes the results of this encounter.
 - (1). List the things the blind man did?
 - (2). Luke tells us the healed man followed Jesus. What would this tell you about the man?
 - (3). If Jesus did the healing, then why did the man praise God?
 - (4). What is the significance of the fact that the people who were present, when the blind man was healed, also praised God?
- 9 Review the chapter paragraph by paragraph. Ask yourself, **concerning each paragraph**, What does this say about the fellowship in which I worship? What does this say about my own spiritual pilgrimage?

LESSON 20: – LUKE 18:1-43

JESUS TEACHES, HEALED BLIND MAN

Introduction

In our best Greek manuscripts there are seven paragraphs in Luke chapter 18. They are as follows:

18:1-8	The Persistent Widow and the Unrighteous Judge
18:9-14	The Pharisee and the Publican Pray
18:15-17	Jesus Receives Little Children
18:18-23	The Rich Young Ruler
18:24-30	The Rich and Heaven
18:31-34	Jesus Foretells His Death
18:35-43	Jesus Healed the Blind Beggar at Jericho

18:1-8 - The Persistent Widow and The Unrighteous Judge

This is the first time, in the Gospel of Luke, that we are told the purpose for which a parable was told before the parable was given. Notice how Luke approaches the subject:

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. Luke 18:1

Luke's words, "to show them . . ." come from the Greek word "pros" - "πρός." In this situation the word should be translated "that" or "in order that." However a person may translate the word, the idea is that of identifying purpose. The purpose Luke identifies is that the disciples should pray continually and should not faint. The word "faint" - "ekkakeo" "ἐκκακέω" means to lack courage, to lose heart or be faint of heart. They should not be afraid that their prayers will not be answered, that God will not hear them. Nothing should hinder them from being insistent and continuous in prayer. Everything that Jesus said in the parable, therefore, must be understood in the light of this purpose.

Luke records the beginning of Jesus' parable as he had so many others:

In a certain town there was a judge . . . Luke 18:2

The location is indefinite. Luke was not nearly as interested in the geography involved as he was the ideas. Luke was less historical in his emphasis than either Matthew or Mark. Though his geographical precision may be lacking; his attention to precision in the detail of ideas was incisive.

Jesus began by describing the judge. The word used here for "judge" is "krites" - "κρίτης" which means to separate, to determine, to pass judgment. In some parts of the Roman empire the "judge" was the one who presided over proceedings much as a judge in our legal system. This judge was known for two things:

1. He did not fear God.

The word for "fear" is phobeo" - "φοβέω" was originally a military term which meant to put to flight, to be afraid of something or someone. It is also used to express a reverential fear. Jesus used the word in such a way one can say that both were true. The judge was

not afraid of God. The judge had no reverential fear of God either. He was a man with no place for God in his life.

2. He did not care for men.

The word for "cared" is "entrepo" - "ἐντρέπω" originally meant "to turn back in shame." It was used later to mean "be humble before" or "to respect." This is its most common usage. This is a way to describe a person who has no respect toward God or mankind.

Having described what the judge was like, Jesus turned to the other main character in this parable - the widow. Jesus spoke of her in these terms:

*And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea,
'Grant me justice against my adversary.' Luke 18:3*

It is interesting that the Greek form of the word "kept coming" was precisely that. This is something that was unfinished and she would not stop coming until it was. Whatever else this widow was, she was persistent. She was determined that justice was going to be done.

Notice that Jesus said that she was a widow. A special set of legal rules applied to dealings with widows. The law required Jews to take special care of the widows. The law also forbid people to take away the home or food from a widow in payment of a debt, no matter what the circumstances. This did not mean that this law was always followed. In fact, Jesus chided the Pharisee for taking away the possessions of both the fatherless and the widow.

Apparently some man, Pharisee or otherwise, had taken this widow to court and had won a judgment against her. This allowed him to take her home away from her. This widow knew that this was illegal and she had the determination and courage to confront the judge constantly until justice was rendered. The widow's plea was simple and precise - give me justice against my adversary. Jesus chose His words carefully. No one in Israel was to be an adversary against a widow or a fatherless child.

When she came, the judge was not disposed to grant her petition. As indicated before, she was a persistent lady. After hearing her petition time after time after time, the judge thought the matter over. Neither the legality of the case, nor the politics of the case were any longer the issue. The real concern was that she was going to wear him out with her continual coming before him.

It is as though we are eavesdropping on the judge's conversation with himself. I am not afraid of God and I don't care what people think. Because this widow keeps bothering me I must act. (The word is "kopon" - "κόπον" which means to vex; to be wearisome, to cause exhaustion), I am going to see that justice is done before she wears me out.

Jesus then draws the parallel for His disciples. Jesus said,

*And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?
Will he keep putting them off? Luke 18:6, 7*

Jesus riveted the attention of the disciples to the words He placed in the mouth of the judge. Jesus is again using an illustration of something these people knew very well to illustrate something they did not know at all. All of them had encountered determined persistent people who were either going to get what they needed or drive others to distraction in the process.

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Jesus is teaching by contrast. He was saying, If an unrighteous judge is going to hear the importunate prayer, think of what the holiness of God will do concerning the prayer against injustice. Jesus drives the point home with an obvious question, "Will he keep putting them off?" The obvious answer is "absolutely not!"

In verse eight, Jesus talks about the results of the widow's importunity.

I tell you he will see that they get justice, and quickly. Luke 18:8a.

Jesus used these words to describe the urgency with which the judge would not only rule in her favor, but would be quick about it. He would do anything to get that woman off his back. In this whole parable, Jesus is following two parallel ideas. Jesus portrayed the judge as a type of God the father. At the same time, Jesus portrayed the widow as those who believe in God and serve Him without reservation.

A nagging question demands our attention. If God is just; if God wants to answer, then why doesn't He answer immediately? This question is further stressed by the parable Jesus was teaching here. There is no place in Scripture that teaches that God is reluctant to answer our prayer; meet our needs. One consideration is that God is not reluctant to answer. God is looking, however, for the opportune time, the best time to meet the needs of His people.

I do not understand why I should persist in prayer when God already knows my need and desires to answer. This does not relieve me of the divine command that I pray and keep on praying. Persistent prayer must not be misunderstood to mean that one can talk God into something He would not otherwise do. Importunate prayer is the gradual realignment of my thinking to come to grips with the divine design for my life. This often results in a redirection of my praying in areas where I am unable, at first, to pray as I ought.

A word of caution is in order. When we read a parable, we are tempted to try to make everything in the story fit together. Every storyteller of that day knew that the story was not supposed to hold together completely. There is no doubt that Jesus is drawing a parallel between God the Father and the judge. That does not mean God was as calloused as the judge. He was not! Jesus was also drawing a parallel between the widow and the church. It does not mean that the church has to make a nuisance of itself so as to get God to do what needs doing. In a parabolic situation, there is just one message that Jesus was trying to get across - If we come expectantly, persistently, God will hear and answer us.

The closing sentence in the paragraph shifts the focus slightly. Jesus was dealing with the need to pray and keep on praying. Now, He turns His attention to the element of faith that enables a person to pray and keep on praying, believing that it will make a difference.

However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

Luke 18:8b

Real prayer is not possible without the ingredient of faith. Jesus was faced with a devastating possibility. The Son of Man could come and not find people for whom discernible results are anticipated when they pray. Jesus' mention of the coming of the Son of Man harks back to the teaching of Jesus in 17:20-37.

18:9-14 - The Pharisee and the Publican Pray

Again in this parable, Luke explains the reason for the parable before it is given. This has not happened, in the Gospel of Luke, before this chapter. This is how Luke described the situation.

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable. Luke 18:9.

There were those, particularly among the Pharisees, who were proud of their humility, confident of their own righteousness. Jesus had these people particularly in mind when He taught this parable. In the Greek text, there is a slight difference in the emphasis. It might be translated, "to some of those trusting/relying on themselves that they are righteous." Righteousness might be described as that which is in accord with right, with God's will; that which is just, that which is without partiality. The Pharisees of every generation of human beings would rally to that understanding. If one perceives himself as righteous, He faces the real danger of feeling superior and aloof to all others. This would be in direct conflict with the desire and action of God.

This scenario probably happened at one time or another, but it is doubtful if Jesus had a specific incident in mind when he told the story. Notice how Jesus posed the story:

Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. Luke 18:10

We must remember that there were parts of some parables that intentionally stretched the acceptance of the common people. Everyone knew, for instance, that it was not possible for the tax collector to enter the temple to pray. He might stand outside and pray, but even there the radicals might drive him away.

A word needs to be said about the Pharisees. The sect of the Pharisees was a vital part of the Jewish religious scene from about 100 B.C. until 70 A.D.. They gathered into communities to preserve the holiness of Israel, to reenact the holiness of the temple in the Jewish home. The group was sorely needed when it started. As happens so often, the movement wavered from its first love. By the time of Jesus they were more interested in the oral law than the written; they were more interested in their reputation as holy men, than in keeping the will and law of God. The pharisees went to the temple three times each day to pray.

Those who heard Jesus teaching would be either incensed and outraged at what He said or scandalized by His descriptions. Many people thought of the Pharisees as the arch-righteous people of the community. That is not the presentation Jesus made in this parable.

This parable was designed as a bazaar contrast between the Pharisees, on the one hand, and the tax collector on the other. Take a minute and consider what Jesus said about both men:

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THE PHARISEE	THE TAX COLLECTOR
Prayed about himself v. 11	He felt unworthy - stood at distance. 13
Arrogant - v. 11 I am not like all other men	humble v. 13- not look up to heaven
Felt superior v. 11	He was contrite, penitent v. 13
Proud v. 12 - Fast twice in week	Justified before God v. 14
Not justified before God v. 14	Humbled v. 14
Self exalting v. 14	Really exalted v. 14
Humbled v. 14	

In verse 11, Jesus painted a picture of what the Pharisee was like:

The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: "God I thank you that I am not like all other men - robbers, evildoers, adulterers - or even this tax collector. Luke 18:11

Jesus described the Pharisee as standing to pray. The standing posture was a way of expressing exclusiveness, an intense separation from all others who were not as holy as they. The text says the Pharisee prayed about himself. Another translation of this passage might be that "he prayed to himself." One of the tragedies of those who consider themselves holier than the rest of the population is that they often end up worshipping themselves rather than God.

The second observation about this prayer is that though he gave God thanks, he was offering praise about himself. He put himself in a unique class - superior to **all** other men. Arrogance is too mild a word to identify the feelings this man expressed in his prayer.

Jesus continued to describe the Pharisee. He said:

I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. Luke 18:12

This is one instance where the Pharisees held the oral law above the written law. There is nowhere that the law commands the Pharisees to fast even once a week. They are only commanded to fast on the day of atonement. Those who wished to be especially pious would fast twice in the week. It is not a coincidence that the two fast days were Monday and Thursday. These were also the days on which the market was held and there were more people present in the cities than any other days of the week. Historical records indicate that on these fast days they would wear tattered cloths and appear very drawn. Fasting was a sign of their self-righteousness, not of their devotion to God.

The Pharisee also claimed to give a tenth of all that he received. This again was more than the written Law required. Numbers 18 required that the Jewish man tithe his produce. Here again the oral law received more credence than the written law. He was required to give a tithe of everything he received. They went to extremes with their tithing. They even tithed the seeds of weeds that grew in their compound.

This was a shock and scandal for those who listened. The Pharisees had a reputation as the most devout people in the community. This is exactly what Jesus was **not** portraying. It is appropriate to believe that the Pharisees were as angry as the others were scandalized.

With the use of the word "but," Jesus turns His attention to the strong contrast of the life of the tax collector. Jesus said of him:

*But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."
Luke 18:13*

Jesus' presentation of the tax collector was very precise. The tax collector stood at a distance. He knew his place; ostracized people always do. He knew that he was not worthy to be in the presence of decent people. This publican knew that he was not worthy to come to the temple itself. He was well aware that he was forever denied entrance to the temple.

He was well acquainted with guilt. The tax collector felt so much guilt that he would not even look in the direction of heaven. The Pharisee wanted everyone to see just how good he was. The tax collector was afraid people would discover just how much he lacked of being good. Jesus said that the tax collector beat upon his breast. This was a sign of contrition, a symbol of just how badly he felt about his former way of life.

The prayer of the tax collector was a prayer of repentance. He was admitting just how awful his life had been and pleading for mercy on his life. Our text says that the tax collector prayed, "God have mercy on me, a sinner." The Greek text is more pointed. It says, "God, have mercy on me **the** sinner. He was setting himself up as the chief of sinners, while the Pharisee set himself as the holy man among all holy men. That is the essence of the difference between the two men.

Jesus then brought the whole parable to a conclusion with this direct summary.

I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. Luke 18:14

Again, the Pharisees had to be as angry as the others were scandalized. Who could think of the Pharisees as less righteous than a tax collector? That was unthinkable in the eyes of the Jews. Jesus was saying that the tax collector was justified by God and the Pharisee was not. Jewish people thought of the tax collectors as unforgivable, destined for eternal punishment. In the eyes of the people of Israel, these men were predestined to damnation, unforgivable. In the eyes of God he was as just as if he had never sinned. It was not because of the regimen of rigorous righteous acts. It was because God saw him as pure because of what God did, not because of what the tax collector did.

Jesus concludes the parable with what seemed to be a paradox.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Luke 18:14b

This was just a summary of what happened in the parable. The Pharisee exalted himself, but God did not justify him. The man was humbled. On the other hand the tax collector, humbled himself before God and the Pharisee, but God lifted him up and exalted him. Humility is the garb of exaltation. It does not seem so in our society, but it is true, just the same.

18:15-17 - Jesus Receives Little Children

In our best Greek texts, this paragraph begins with the word "and." This establishes a definite tie between this paragraph and the previous one. It now becomes important to determine what the nature of that relationship is. In 18:9-14, Jesus told a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector praying. This brief paragraph deals with Jewish mothers who

wanted to bring their little babies to Jesus. The paragraphs seem quite different. Notice, however, that in the prior chapter, one man, the tax collector, was justified and Jesus spoke of him as exalted. This is the kind of person who fills the qualifications Jesus described, in 18:17. This short paragraph, dealing with little children, is an illustration of what Jesus was teaching in the previous chapter.

This little paragraph is typical of the Jewish experience. There are two contrasts in motion simultaneously. There is a contrast between the mothers who wanted to bring their babies to Jesus and the disciples who tried to prevent this. There is another contrast between Jesus and the disciples. The 12 were trying to protect Jesus from the intrusion of the mothers with their babies. Jesus was reaching out to these mothers and babies. One wonders why this latter contrast existed. The disciples were trying to protect Jesus' time and energy. Jesus, on the other hand, was reaching out to these mothers and babies trying to expend more energy and use more time. The difference is in the priorities of Jesus and the priorities of the disciples. The disciples saw these little ones as interruptions; they saw them as distractions. Jesus, on the other hand, saw these children as the priority use of His time. In the process, Jesus made an announcement about the makeup of the kingdom that is clearer than anything He had said on the subject previously.

But Jesus called the little children to him. He said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Luke 18:16

Jesus used this tense situation as an opportunity to teach His disciples. He taught them some important things about the kingdom of God.

We do not know the origin of the custom. For some reason Jewish women were eager to bring their babies to a prominent Rabbi on the infants first birthday. They brought their child in the hope that the Rabbi would pronounce a blessing upon the little one. Jesus was not dealing with the mother's motives. He was dealing with the qualities which are so common among infants. We need to be clear about what Jesus was saying and about what He was not saying.

Jesus was not saying that only children can become citizens of His kingdom. Age was not the factor that Jesus was lifting up.

On the other hand, there were some things that Jesus was saying. He said that the qualities of the child are the qualities which must be found in those who would be a part of that kingdom. Little children have an ability to trust that we need to emulate. They have a deep sense of curiosity that we somehow lose as we grow older. That curiosity; that desire to learn and to know is vital to one's participation in the kingdom. Adults have a need to be able to understand everything that touches their lives. Little children have the ability to trust that would be most helpful in our adult lives. Little children seem to know how to forgive at a deeper level and with greater ease than any of us could do as adults. Jesus is talking about these traits of childhood which are a vital part of the life of those who would be a part of His kingdom.

Jesus continues by making an announcement.

I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. Luke 18:17

Jesus stressed the importance of being childlike, not of being a child. This is a simple, but very important distinction. His statement is in final terms, not in possibilities.

18:18-23 - The Rich Young Ruler

The title we have given this paragraph is intentionally misleading. It was used intentionally because this is the title we commonly use to describe this passage. The truth is that the text never speaks of this man as "young." Matthew speaks of this person as "One came to him," Matthew 19:16-30; while Mark speaks of the person as "a man" in Mark 10:17-31. None of the three synoptic writers refer to him as "young." It is possible that we consider him "young" because he responded to Jesus, "all of these have I kept from my **childhood**." It is understandable that we might think in this manner, but it is not acceptable interpretation. This text speaks of him as "rich" and as "a man," and as a "ruler," but in no other defensible terms.

The ruler addressed Jesus as "good teacher." These words "agathe" "ἀγαθὴ" "good" "didaskale" - "διδάσκαλε"-"teacher" immediately grab our attention. If there is a "good teacher," then there must be some other kinds of teachers who are not so good. Is this the rich man's intention by his designation? Certainly there were some other kinds of teachers that Jesus and the whole audience knew about.

A "teacher" was one who gave instruction. The Greek language had one term, "katecheo" - "κατηχέω" which was used to describe the lecturing, the oral instruction of the young. They had another word, "paid" - "παῖδ" - which described the training of children. They also had this third word, "didactic" - "διδασκτικός" which described one who gave instructions concerning the faith of Israel. We often think of this as the task of the local Rabbi.

The rich man's question reveals something about the man. The question indicates that the man had an intense interest in eternal life.

A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Luke 18:18

This rich man has sometimes been characterized as one who wanted to know of some immediate, singular action that could guarantee his place in heaven. A better way to translate this verse might be, "what must I **be doing** to guarantee eternal life." The man was talking about an ongoing lifestyle; something he could begin and never stop doing. He was intent on "inheriting" eternal life. The word "inherit," is a bit misleading. We tend to think of it in terms of an estate. That was not the Jewish idea. This word "kleronomeo" or "kleronomevw" identified several things. It could be used to describe one's birthright; one's place in the family estate. It could be used to identify a reward that the benefactor might present. It could also be used to describe a gift as opposed to a responsibility. It appears that in this instance, the rich man was thinking of a reward given in response to an acceptable way of living. The man wanted instruction on how to live. He wanted to be certain that when he died he would receive eternal life.

The text does not so indicate, but Jesus' response must have frustrated the rich man. Jesus did not immediately give the information the man wanted, but confronted the way he asked the question.

"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered, "No one is good - except God alone." Luke 18:19

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Jesus was not being picky. Only God is good, but the man was treating Jesus as he would any Rabbi. Jesus wanted him to realize that he was not dealing with just one more Rabbi, but indeed was dealing with God, in human form.

Without further discussion of the matter, Jesus addressed the man's question

You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'
Luke 18:20

One needs to make some observations about the response of Jesus - listing the commandments. First, except for the last one Jesus mentioned, "honor your father and mother," all the commands he mentioned were negative commands. One might wonder if while Jesus was listing negative commands, why did He omit the final one, "you shall not covet?" It certainly has something to do with what Jesus was talking about. We can only answer that we do not really know why Jesus did that.

A comparison of the commands Jesus quoted with the list as found in Exodus 20:1-17 can be very helpful

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS	THE COMMANDS JESUS QUOTED
1. have no other gods before me	
2. make no graven images	
3. Shall not misuse the name of God	
4. Remember the Sabbath-keep it holy	
5. Honor your father and mother	Remember your father and mother
6. Shall not murder	Shall not kill
7. Shall not commit adultery	Shall not commit adultery
8. Shall not steal	Shall not steal
9. Shall not give false testimony	Shall not give false witness
10. Shall not covet	

Notice that the rich man's question deals with one's actions toward other people. Jesus picked up the man where he was and attempted to move on from there. Jesus' answer dealt with the things that uniquely relate to other people. You will notice that the omissions, with one exception - covet, deal with one's unique relationship with God. It was a way of engaging the rich man's mind before going on to more important issues. If Jesus could engage the man in dialogue over the lesser matters, He would then earn the right to deal with weightier matters of the rich man's relationship with God.

The man answered in a way that surprises most of us. People cannot usually claim that they have kept the five commands completely. Jesus makes no mention about whether the rich man told the truth or not. I suspect that the man did tell the truth or Jesus would have found a way to remind him of exceptions to that statement. Nevertheless, the man claimed to have kept these five commands.

"All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said. Luke 18:21

The rich man claimed to have kept these commands since he was a boy. The reference here is to the time since he had become responsible, since he had been declared a man,

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since his bar-mitzvah. Jesus did not comment on this statement, but it is possible for a person to observe these laws for a lifetime, at least as they understood these laws.

This statement does not convey the strength of the rich man's statement. The word "kept" comes from *phulasso* - "*fulavssw*" which means to guard, to watch, to give protection. It is to guard over our obedience to the law like a mother animal guards her young.

Having engaged the rich man's mind, Jesus now moved on to deeper concerns. Notice the great precision with which Jesus spoke.

When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." Luke 18:22

Jesus had carefully led this rich man from the things that he had done well to the things that were a real problem in his spiritual journey. He was apparently not aware of these. This time Jesus did not refer the rich man to the commands. He rather gave him a simple instruction which he was totally able to carry out and know that he had done so. Jesus had cut through all the religious activity to the priorities of the rich man's life. Jesus was not so much identifying the problem as suggesting a solution. Telling the man to sell what he owned was a solution to the man's problem of priorities. The first commandment was that he should have no other god before Jehovah. Jesus was, in fact, saying that the man's wealth and possessions had taken the central place God had reserved for Himself in the rich man's heart. The man could easily say, that is not true. Jesus moved past that objection to a demonstration of the truth. If the man could part with his possessions at the command of Jesus, then it would be clear that wealth was not the god of his life. On the other hand if the man could not do that, then he had violated the first commandment. This would clearly stand in the way of his securing eternal life. Wealth has been the secret god of many wealthy people, and some not-so-wealthy as well.

We need to be clear about what Jesus was saying. In this instance, Jesus was saying that wealth had become a deity, replacing Jehovah in the rich man's heart. Jesus was not saying that there is anything intrinsically evil in the possession of wealth. The harm; the evil comes in placing that wealth in the priority position in a person's life.

This rich man was not prepared for what he heard. He probably thought that he would be thoroughly commended because he had been a good man, but being a good man was not enough. It is clear that the rich man was shocked at Jesus instructions:

When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. Luke 18:23

It is interesting that Matthew 19:22 and Mark 10:22 both say, "He went away sad, because he had great wealth." The rich man, when he left, had made a choice; he put his possessions ahead of God and this was disobedience to the first commandment. Our culture may not have idols of wood and stone, but there is little doubt that many people have given the priority position in their life to their possessions.

18:24-30 - The Rich and Heaven

This was an emotionally charged moment in the ministry of Jesus. Notice His sadness:

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Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Luke 18:24, 25

Observe that Jesus did not say that it was impossible for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. There is nothing essentially evil in wealth. It is, however, an intense temptation for many people. Jesus said that it was possible for the rich to enter the kingdom, but it would be with great difficulty. There are two reasons for this difficulty: First, it is easy for wealth and possessions to take the priority place in one's life and this is disobedience. Second, it is more difficult to trust in God when you have sufficient wealth to care for your needs. Again, it is not impossible, but it is very difficult.

You will find the statement about the camel, in Luke 18:25, in Matthew and Mark also. There is great difference of opinion concerning the meaning of the image Jesus suggested to the disciples. First, note that there is no known problem with our best Greek text at this point. Some interpreters say this is a hyperbole - a gross exaggeration for stressing a point of truth. On the other hand, some interpreters claim that this is a reference to a little gate beside the main gate of a city. Others believe that there is a change of vowel and in so doing the figure of speech was changed. Instead of a camel going through the eye of a needle, you change to threading a needle with an anchor rope. There is no textual evidence to support the change of the vowel suggested in this last choice. The two prior possibilities seem to have the most credence. In such instances, the most natural interpretation is usually preferred. Both are possible. I prefer the hyperbole which says it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

This posed a serious question for the disciples. They were of Jewish extraction and these people had an understanding about wealth and righteousness. It was a common saying among the Jews that God blesses the righteous and punishes the wicked. This was the position of Job's friends. Their deductive reasoning said, God blesses righteousness, you are being punished, not blessed, therefore you are sinful. It scandalized the disciples to hear Jesus say that this rich man could not enter the kingdom of God because he had made possessions his god. Like other people in their culture, these disciples believed that riches were the evidence of righteousness. They apparently did not think about the fact that Jesus was uniquely righteous, but was a long way from wealthy.

Luke caught the gist of their confusion when he said,

Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?" Luke 18:26

The confusion of the disciples was quite real. First, here is a man who had kept the law from the time he was old enough to be responsible under Jewish law. Second, this obedient man was wealthy and in their understanding that meant that he was quite righteous. Their question was appropriate. This man was outstanding by any Jewish standard, and Jesus was saying that the man could not be a member of the kingdom of God. If that were true, then they began to wonder if anyone at all could qualify.

True to form, Jesus did not answer their confusion directly, but indirectly. It was a way to give them something to think about and attempt to come up with the answer for themselves.

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*Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."
Luke 18:27.*

Jesus stated a profound truth in simple terms. The human capacity is severely limited. This, however, does not mean that God is so limited. There are no means a human being can initiate by which the rich who trust in their riches can be brought into the kingdom of God. Because God is all powerful, He can change the heart of the rich. He can enable them to trust in God rather than their riches, they can put God ahead of everything else in life although they possess great wealth. It will, nonetheless, be a miracle of the grace of God and nothing less.

Peter was always the spokesman for the disciples and often spoke only out of his own pain, but here he speaks in collective form.

Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!" Luke 18:28

The concern was a deep confusion about just whom could be saved. Peter expressed this concern. They had done all that they possibly could to serve the Lord. Since an apparently obedient, rich man was rejected, the disciples began to wonder about their own security in Christ. In pain, Peter cried out, "We have left all we had to follow you." We can identify with the passion of that kind of pain.

Now Jesus answered the disciples in very direct terms. He knew their confusion and wanted to speak directly to the troubling issue.

"I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and in the age to come, eternal life." Luke 18:29,30

At first blush, this statement seems comforting and soothing. It is that, but it is more. Jesus began with the words, "I tell you the truth." This does not mean that He had previously been telling non truth. It does mean that this is a point that Jesus wished to stress. This is a very important point to Jesus. Jesus was affirming that they had indeed left all to follow Him, but that He would not be in their debt for this great sacrifice. It was necessary to make such a sacrifice in order to please and serve the Lord, but even in the pain of their sacrifice, there was rich blessing. Observe that Jesus put a limitation on His promise - it was for those who made such a sacrifice for the sake of the kingdom of God. This was important because then as now there were those who would even sacrifice apparently for the kingdom when in reality it was on their own behalf. Jesus does not promise to replace losses. He promised that they would receive many times over what they had lost. The superlative response is two fold - they would now receive more than they gave up and in the age to come they would receive eternal life. Certainly, they would be greatly blessed for what they endured.

18:31-34 - Jesus Foretells His Death, Again

This is a report of a confusing, devastating experience for the disciples. It was a problem for them because their idea of what it meant for Jesus to be the Messiah was different from His. Throughout this trip toward Jerusalem, Jesus had been giving hints, but now He will come out frankly and tell them of what is about to happen. Even this, of course, they will not understand.

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Jesus took the Twelve aside to teach them. He taught them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. Luke 18:31

This statement by Jesus has little specific meaning to modern Christian individuals, but it carried great meaning for the people of that day. We have some general knowledge of what the prophets had to say about the Messiah, but it is not very specific. These people, however, knew exactly what Jesus was saying. They knew what the prophets said about the suffering of the Messiah. To their shock and dismay, Jesus was saying that everything that the prophets had said would happen, was now about to come to pass. Jesus found it necessary to tell the disciples, in small doses, about his suffering and death. Each episode was direct, more graphic than the previous one. The closer they get to Jerusalem, the more specific and graphic His explanations became.

Jesus continued with his announcement about the trauma that awaited Him in Jerusalem.

He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. Luke 18:32

If the disciples had thought of what Jesus had said, they would have understood it very well. It was almost impossible for them to do this. They had an idea of a Messiah that was all powerful and none of these kinds of things could happen to him. These were, in fact, exactly the kinds of things that were to happen to him in a very few days. This kind of announcement was particularly distasteful to Jews. First, they did not believe that they were to be conquered by Gentile peoples. Secondly, they did not believe that God would allow them to suffer in this way because they were chosen people. Put yourself in the place of the disciples for a moment. You are counting on Jesus for everything that is to happen. Suddenly He tells you that it is all over when you have believed that He would destroy His enemies. How would you feel? Their fear, frustration, anger and disbelief should make much more sense against this background.

Jesus did not just leave it there. He went on to tell them about the good news, the resurrection.

On the third day he will rise again. Luke 18:33

Notice the contrast of Jesus description. First he told them about all the terrible things that would happen, and instantly he told them that something magnificent was going to happen - the resurrection. This had to be difficult because they had heard about resurrections before, but usually it had been a false report. They had never heard of a real resurrection. Now Jesus was claiming that He would be raised from the dead.

The minds of the disciples had to be overloaded. Luke describes their situation:

The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about. Luke 18:34

Our first reaction is "How could they possibly miss what Jesus was saying?! It is so clear." More careful reflection reminds us that often when things were just as clear, we did not understand at all. Later we wondered, "How could I have been so dense as to miss this?" There is an added factor that Luke brings to our attention. In this instance, the disciples did not understand because the meaning was hidden from them. Because the

meaning was hidden nothing that Jesus said had made sense to them. The text does not say. I am certain, however, that after the events took place, it was not difficult for them to remember what Jesus had said and grasp what it had meant.

One is forced to wonder, why were these things hidden? We must remember that these were emotional people who, to some extent, had a strong investment in who Jesus was. They could understandably do something, in an attempt to be noble. Jesus, however, could suffer for breaking a Roman law rather than suffering innocently for our sins.

18:35-43 - Jesus Healed the Blind Beggar at Jericho

We need to set the stage for this event. This was the preparation time for the feast of Passover. Pilgrims who were going to attend the Passover in Jerusalem were in route to the city. Almost every pilgrim from Galilee and points north would pass through Jericho on their way to Jerusalem. This made it possible for them to avoid passing through the territory of the dreaded Samaritans. Did you ever wonder why at other times Jesus went through Samaria when traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem. On this occasion, however, when traveling to the Passover feast, he went through Jericho? We must remember that Jesus had no strong feelings against the Samaritans. If, however, Jesus and His disciples had come through Samaria, on this occasion, they would not have been welcomed at the temple; they would have been considered unclean. Pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem were particularly generous with needy people along the way. This accounts for the number of beggars who lined the way to Jerusalem. People who were not going up to Jerusalem for the feast would line the streets to encourage the pilgrims and offer blessings upon them as they traveled. This would happen in every village through which these devout Jews would pass on their journey. He may not have been here begging at other seasons of the year. This blind beggar, however, was in a place where every pilgrim on his way to Jerusalem would see him. Certainly he hoped that they would take pity on him and give him alms.

Luke describes this scene with his usual detail. Jesus knew this place very well. He had passed this way with His disciples on many occasions.

As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."
Luke 18:35-37

From the text, it sounds as though the blind man was seated outside town to the north of Jericho. That was probably not true. As you may know, there is more than one city of Jericho. These towns sit north and south of each other on the road which parallels the River Jordan. The blind man could have been sitting in the middle of Jericho and be at the place where the pilgrims were approaching the other Jericho. The text is not specific at this point.

The fact that the beggar had to ask what was happening makes it clear that this was not a man who just had very poor eyesight. This man was totally blind. He asked the people and they told him what he wanted to know. This suggests that these people knew him well. They saw their opportunity to help him as the common expectation of local people.

Notice that they told the blind man that "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." The blind man called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" The blind man knew about

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Jesus. It was not that Jesus was from Nazareth that identified this Rabbi for the beggar; it was the fact that Jesus was of the lineage of David. The beggar was not just talking about the tribe from which Jesus' ancestors came. This was one of the ways by which Jesus was referred to as the Messiah. apparently The beggar believed that Jesus was the Messiah and he was determined to get Jesus' attention and plead for His help.

There is a subtle picture in the words of Luke.

*He **called out** "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!" Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but **he shouted** all the more, "Son of David have mercy on me!" Luke 18:38, 39*

Luke tells us that the blind beggar "called out." This word, "boao" - "βοάω" means to cry out, to exclaim. In verse 39, however, it says the blind beggar "shouted." This is a totally different word - "krazo" "κράζω-." It is a word with much greater intensity. It means to cry for help, a wailing lamentation, the cry for vengeance. The beggar is crying out with all that is in him. He wants to make absolutely certain that Jesus heard him and was going to help him.

Notice that Luke tells us that "those who led the way rebuked him . . ." Who are these people? There are at least two possibilities.

1. It is possible that Luke was identifying the pilgrims who happened to be at the front of this group of pilgrims heading for Jerusalem.
- 2 It could be that Luke was identifying the people, probably family, who led this man to and from his place of begging each day. My own preference is that these were the members of the beggars family who brought him to this place each day. The reason for this position is to be found in the answer to the next question.

One wonders, why did those who led the way rebuke the blind man? Again, there are at least three possibilities: 1. It may have been that they wanted this to be a joyful time of blessing and praise as it was intended to be for people who passed through their town on the way to celebrate the joyful feast of Passover in Jerusalem. This was a trip of a lifetime for most of these people. Everyone wanted it to be a time of joy and blessing. They did not want it to be a time to be disturbed by a beggar screaming at the Rabbi to whom they had been listening along the way. 2. The second possibility is that the family members wanted the beggar to be quiet, not because he was disturbing the pilgrims, but because of the things that the beggar said when he screamed at Jesus. The beggar was acknowledging that Jesus was the Messiah. This was enough to start a riot and get the beggar stoned to death if there were any very strict Jews present. 3. It is entirely possible that the family members wanted the blind man to be quiet because they did not believe that Jesus could do anything about the blind man's condition. It might seem like foolish talking to them so they asked him to just be quiet. The family members, It seems to me, were acting out of fear for the beggar's safety and for his life. I firmly believe that this is what Luke was saying and the reason behind what the people did to try to get the beggar to be quiet.

It should be noted that this blind man was determined to get Jesus' attention no matter what it took. He was not worried about what people might think. He was not concerned about whether family members would approve of his tactics or not; he wanted Jesus to do something about his blindness. There is a lesson here for us as we seek God for specific needs in our lives and ministry.

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Whatever the reason for the people to try to quiet the beggar, Jesus heard him and stopped to do something about it.

Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?"
Luke 18:40, 41

Luke adds subtlety to his careful description of this event. Read these verses again. Why, for instance, would Jesus want them to bring the blind beggar to him? Why didn't Jesus go to the place where the beggar was sitting? This is a royal setting. It is as though the blind beggar was being brought before the king of the realm. There were a number of kings, in history, who set aside days when people of their realm could come before him to make petition for their needs. This was a very special time for these poor people. It is this image that Luke has painted for us. Notice the question Jesus asked the blind beggar. "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus was not asking for necessary information because he already knew what the man needed and wanted desperately. This was the royal invitation for the person to make his request known to the king so that he could consider whether to bestow such a gift. It was a subtle way for Jesus to let the people know that He was the king of Israel, without being charged with blasphemy by the Jews and sedition by the Romans. This was not to be the reason for Jesus' death. He was to die bearing your sins and mine, not for violating a law of Rome.

The blind man did not have to take time to decide what he wanted Jesus to do. He spoke up.

"Lord, I want to see," he replied. Luke 18:41b

Here is a second suggestion that this blind beggar believed that Jesus was the Messiah. He addressed Jesus as "Lord." In the Greek text, this word is "kurios" - "kuvrio"." In the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, the name for God "adonai" is translated "kurios" "κύριος." The beggar could have called Jesus "Rabbi"; he could have called Jesus by name: he called Him "Lord." We must acknowledge that beggars sometimes called potential donors "lord," but that does not seem to apply in this instance.

The blind man was right to the point - "I want to see." There is passion in those words. There is conviction in his response, an intensity that demands attention. This was his one glimmer of hope that he would experience the miracle of sight and he was going to make the most of it.

The response of Jesus was as direct as the request.

Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you."
Luke 18:42

On other occasions when Jesus healed blind people, He touched them or placed mud on their eyes. It is interesting that in this instance He simply commanded the blind man to receive his sight.

Again, the response of Jesus is in the image of the king bestowing blessings upon his subjects. Jesus gave the man exactly what he had asked. It was royally bestowed as a completed act - Receive your sight. Jesus must have shocked everyone when He said, "Your faith has healed you." This idea shocks people because they tend to think of faith as something that they do for themselves. We need to remember that faith has its origin in

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God. That is the reason that the disciples said, "Increase our faith." What Jesus was saying was that this man's faith freed God, who gave it, to do that which He longs to do in the heart of the faithful one. The word "healed" is "sozo" - "σώζω" which means to release from the disease and its effects. The faith of this man was responsible for removing the blindness and all of its side-effects. This in no way takes away from the fact that God is the one who does the healing. It does not suggest that if one is just positive enough healing will take place. Faith releases the power of God to accomplish His will and power in our lives.

Luke takes a page from the book of Mark when he reported the result of this encounter.

Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God. Luke 18:43

The healing was instantaneous. Jesus spoke; the man could see. That is a picture of the greatness of the power of God.

Observe what Luke tells us about what the beggar did.

1. He received his sight
2. He followed Jesus - apparently toward Jerusalem
3. He praised God.

Luke does not give us the whole story. Did the man just follow Jesus through the town? Did the man follow Jesus all the way to Jerusalem to tell the gathered pilgrims what Jesus had done in his life? Luke does not give us that information, so we can only conjecture about these questions. One of the things that identified the Messiah was His ability to restore the blind to sight. It would not be surprising if the man went to Jerusalem to announce this miracle. The word "follow" "akoloutheo" "ακολουθέω" does not mean to walk behind, but to be a companion, to be like someone, to be in union with someone. He viewed himself as a disciple of Jesus. Jesus did the healing, but the man gave praise to God. It appears that this man not only knew who Jesus was, but also understood that God was involved in what Jesus was doing on his behalf.

There is another idea at the close of this paragraph. This is what Luke recorded:

When all the people saw it, they also praised God. Luke 18:43b

Jesus healed the man; the man praised God. When others saw what happened, they joined in the praise. This seems to be a common experience in the ministry of Jesus. These people did not just hear about the miracle. They saw it for themselves. When they saw what Jesus had done, they gave praise to God. We should also note that this affirmation by the crowd adds affirmation to what the healed man was saying. They were the necessary witnesses for truth to be established as noted in Deuteronomy 17:6.

Conclusion

Three of the seven paragraphs in this chapter deal with prayer in one way or another. In two of the three episodes the idea of strong importunity is advanced. In the third paragraph which deals with this subject, Jesus points out the relationship between the quality of life and the petitions which one presents to God. This is very important. Think about your private prayer experience. Remember that the quality of your life is more

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important than the petition you bring before the Lord. Think about the congregation of which you are a part. The quality of our corporate life is far more important than all the schemes we try, the grandiose prayers we make. In view of these understandings, what changes will take place in your life?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 21

LUKE 19:1-48

JESUS' TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

1. In our best Greek manuscripts there are five paragraphs in Luke chapter 19. On the table below write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

19:1-10	
19:11-27	
19:28-40	
19:41-44	
19:45-48	

2. In Luke 19:1-10, Jesus invited Himself to be a guest in the home of Zacchaeus.
- In a Bible dictionary, try to discover the difference between a tax collector and a chief tax collector.
 - Look at 18:35 and then at 19:1. What problem can you identify? How can you solve it?
 - In 19:5, 6, Jesus looked up into the tree and called Zacchaeus by name. How can you account for this?
 - Then as now, it was good etiquette to never invite yourself into someone's home. Why would Jesus do this?
 - Why would Zacchaeus be so excited to accept Jesus' invitation into his home?
 - In 19:6, Jesus seems in a hurry to go to the home of Zacchaeus. Why would that be?
 - In 19:7, the people muttered when Jesus announced that he was going to the home of Zacchaeus. Why would that be?
 - In 19:8, Zacchaeus made an announcement to Jesus and his other guests.
 - In this announcement he called Jesus, "Lord." Why is that significant?
 - What did Zacchaeus promise to do?
 - Why did he make such a promise?
 - In 19:9, 10, Jesus made an announcement. This was a great shock to everyone who heard Him. What would that be?
 - In 19:10, Luke explains why salvation has come to Zacchaeus' home. What were His reasons?
3. In 19:11-27, Jesus told the story of the minas.
- In 19:11, Luke tells us why Jesus told this parable. What reason did Luke give?
 - This parable is somewhat involved. Can you find a reason why Jesus told this very involved story?

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- c. In 19:14, Jesus said the subjects hated the proposed king. What difference did this make to the ones understanding of the parable?
- d. In 19:16, 17, Jesus described the report of the first servant. What would this report mean to those who listened in view of the parable's announced purpose?
- e. What is the relationship between the reward, in 19:17, and the report in 19:16?
- f. In 19:18, 19, Jesus described the report of the second servant.
 - (1). In what ways were reports 1 (Luke 19:15, 16) and report 2 (19:17, 18) similar?
 - (2). In what ways were they dissimilar?
 - (3). What does this report say about the announced purpose of the parable?
- g. In 19:20, 21, Jesus described the report of the third servant.
 - (1). In what ways was this report different from the others?
 - (2) Examine the results for servants one and two in contrast to the results for servant number three. What did you find?
 - (3). What does this report have to say about the announced purpose of the parable?
 - (4). Review Luke 19:26. Explain this in terms a new Christian could understand.
 - (5). How do you relate 19:27 to the announced purpose of the parable?
- 4. In Luke 19:28-44, Luke describes the triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
 - a. Why was 19:28-30 significant to the flow of this story?
 - b. Why was the means of travel - a donkey - so significant for Jesus to enter Jerusalem?
 - c. In 19:32-34, Jesus told the disciples, in advance, about the challenge they would encounter concerning the untying of the colt. What difference would this make?
 - d. In 19:35, 36, Luke tells of the disciples throwing their cloaks and robes on the donkey and on the road ahead of Jesus. What difference does this make in the story?
 - e. In Luke 19:38a, the crowd shouted, "blessed is the king who comes in the name of the lord." What did they mean by this outcry?
 - f. In Luke 19:39, some of the Pharisees demanded that Jesus rebuke His disciples. Why was this demand made? Why was it important?
 - g. In Luke 19:40, Jesus responded to the demand by the Pharisees. What was His response? Of which stones did He speak?
- 5. In Luke 19:41-44, Luke tells the touching story of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem.
 - a. What did Jesus identify as the reason for the weeping over the city?
 - b. In 19:44, Jesus prophesied that there would not be one stone left upon another. Did this really happen? To what was Jesus pointing with this remark?
 - c. In 19:44, what reason did Jesus give for the shocking prophecy?
- 6. In Luke 19:45-48, Luke gives a picture of Jesus cleansing the temple.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 21

- a. Why would Jesus go to the temple immediately following the triumphal entry into the city?
 - b. What, from the religious establishment's point of view, gave Jesus the right to take control of the temple in this way?
 - c. In Luke 19:46, Jesus defends His actions. What did He say?
 - d. In 19:47, there is a vivid contrast.
 - (1). What is contrasted?
 - (2). What was Luke telling us?
 - e. In 19:48, Luke described the reaction of the crowd.
 - (1). Why would this be important?
 - (2). Look at the contrast between the religious leaders and the crowd. What difference does this make?
7. Reflect on Luke chapter 19.
- a. How do these discoveries affect your life and relationship with God?
 - b. What difference will this make in your service for God?

LESSON 21: – LUKE 19:1-48

JESUS' TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

Introduction

In our best Greek text, there are five paragraphs in Luke chapter nineteen. They are as follows:

19:1-10	Zacchaeus Entertains Jesus
19:11-27	The Parable of the Pounds (mina)
19:28-40	The Triumphal Entrance into Jerusalem
19:41-44	Jesus Wept Over Jerusalem
19:45-48	The Cleansing of the Temple

19:1-10 - Zacchaeus Entertains Jesus

Only Luke told the magnificent story of Zacchaeus. This is not surprising because Luke stresses repeatedly the impact of riches on the righteous. Zacchaeus, a Jew, is mentioned only three times in the Bible and all in this chapter. The name Zacchaeus, comes from the Hebrew, but in Greek it means "to be pure," "to be righteous," "to do good."

The text speaks of Zacchaeus as a "chief tax collector." There are two kinds of tax collectors. The word here is "arxitelonaes" "ἀρχιτέλωνης" and means chief collector of taxes. This person contracted directly with Rome for the right to collect taxes. He would be the most despised of the tax collectors because he dealt personally with the Romans. You might call this group of people tax brokers. This tax collector would also be the richest of the group. A second kind of tax gatherer was known as "telonaes" "τελώνης." This person did the actual collecting of taxes. He contracted with the chief-tax collector for the right to collect taxes in a certain area. He paid his fee directly to the chief-tax collector who in turn paid a fee to Rome. Levi - Matthew - was one of these tax collectors. Zacchaeus, however, was a chief-tax collector.

Because the tax collectors, especially the chief tax collectors, dealt directly with Rome and helped them in keeping Israel in captivity, people thought of these men as not only traitors, but infidels and blasphemers of the worst order. Most everyone would agree that it was not possible for a tax collector to be forgiven of his sin against God and Israel. Because this was true, the rest of the community shunned these men. Their only human contacts were with other tax collectors and other ostracized people - sinners - thieves, murderers and prostitutes. Their families were shunned; their children excluded and their wives ostracized and treated worse than murderers.

Luke opens the paragraph in a surprising manner:

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. Luke 19:1

You will remember that in 18:35, Luke describes Jesus as approaching Jericho. It appears that Jesus was passing through the city. Now eight verses later, Luke described Jesus as entering the city. One must wonder how that is possible. It is much more possible in Jericho than in most other places. First, we must remember that there are two cities of

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Jericho side by side. The ancient city of Jericho was destroyed when the walls fell, (Joshua 6:20,) and the entire city was devastated and the people killed. That city never rebuilt. Another city, by the name of Jericho was built just north of the old city. That city was in existence in the time of Jesus and is still is a thriving city today. It appears that in Luke 18:35, Jesus was approaching the new city. In 19:1 He may have passed through the new city and was approaching the old city. This is the route He would take on His way to Jerusalem. We can't confirm this, but it is plausible.

Everyone in town would know when pilgrims were passing through the city. They would be especially aware of the fact if a well known Rabbi, like Jesus, was passing through their community. Again, Luke describes the event in these terms:

A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. Luke 19:2

The emphasis here is on the fact that this chief tax collector was very wealthy. That was probably a very conservative statement. People hated Zacchaeus because of his occupation, but that was not all. Often, poor people are jealous of the very rich. They hate them not because they are bad people, but simply because the rich have wealth which the poor do not. This had to be the case with Zacchaeus.

Luke continues to describe the situation.

He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. Luke 19:3

We must remember that the hatred of Zacchaeus by the people was intense and extreme. Zacchaeus would not dare to be in a crowd with these people. It would place his life in jeopardy. He had to avoid crowds. The fact that he was a very short man only added to his problems at this point. He could not be in a crowd and being short, he could not see from behind the crowd.

Notice the purpose of Zacchaeus. "He wanted to see who Jesus was." This was not just casual curiosity. Zacchaeus wanted to know who Jesus was; he wanted to know what He was like. He may have heard that Jesus had befriended a fellow tax collector from Capernaum named Levi. That would be astounding news by any standards.

Luke indicates the way Zacchaeus solved that problem.

So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. Luke 19:4

To this day, this type of tree grows at the edge of the modern city of Jericho. They are large trees with large lateral branches that a person weighing 250 pounds could sit on with no fear of breaking. These branches are also quite close to the ground. A minibus could drive under them, but nothing taller. A person could almost walk up the trunk of this unusual tree to get to the strong lower branches. This was an excellent place for a tax collector to see Jesus without the danger of abuse, without harm from community people.

Luke describes the encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus in this way:

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today. So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. Luke 19:5, 6

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Many questions arise from these two verses. 1. How did Jesus know the name of Zacchaeus? 2. How did Jesus know that Zacchaeus was in the tree in the first place? 3. Why would Jesus be in a hurry and say, "Come down immediately"? 4. Why would Jesus feel the need to be a guest in the home of the most ostracized man in town? 5. Why was Zacchaeus so willing to do as Jesus commanded?

There are at least two possible reasons why Jesus would know the name of Zacchaeus.

1. As the Son of Man, He would know all things. That would include the name of this ostracized little man.
2. There is a tradition, which we can neither confirm nor refute, which states that there was a Rabbi, named Zacchaeus, in Nazareth at the time Jesus was growing up. The tradition says that this Zacchaeus disgraced his family by becoming a chief tax collector. Is it possible that this was the man who had taught Jesus the Hebrew language and the law? It is remotely possible, but cannot be affirmed. It is, however, an interesting scenario.

The text does not tell us how Jesus knew that Zacchaeus was in the tree. As the trees stand today, if a person was sitting on a lower branch a passerby could see him. We can only assume that this was also true then.

There are a couple of reasons why Jesus might be in a hurry for Zacchaeus to come down. Safety was an issue. Jesus also had an intense desire to minister to Zacchaeus. By urgency, Jesus could convey the idea of deep desire to spend this time with a person no one else might talk to at all.

Jesus felt a great need to be the guest of the most ostracized man in town. This was important to Jesus because He needed to teach these people something about God. People like people who meet certain standards. God is different. God loves every human being not because they are good, but just because they are. Jesus wanted everyone to know that He cared as deeply for this outcast as for any of the religious leaders. We will say more about this area shortly.

Zacchaeus was probably willing to do almost anything that Jesus could command, simply because Jesus showed an interest in him and no one else did. Zacchaeus had probably heard that Jesus had befriended Levi and probably could see Levi among the disciples at this very time. There was something about the love of Jesus that attracted his total attention.

We need to ask ourselves why Jesus would be so forward as to invite Himself to be a guest in the home of Zacchaeus. This would normally be a breach of etiquette under any other circumstances. Probably, Zacchaeus would not invite anyone to be his guest. Other than his outcast friends, no one would be willing to enter his house, much less be his guest. In order to be his guest, a person would have to affirm that they accept him and his lifestyle. This would make them as much an outcast as he was. The second reason grows out of the first. By inviting Himself to be a guest of Zacchaeus, Jesus made it clear that He wanted to be a house guest; He wanted to accept Zacchaeus no matter what he may have done or what others may think. This would convince Zacchaeus that Jesus cared deeply about him.

The haste with which Zacchaeus descended from the tree to receive Jesus is an indication of just how happy he was about this surprise. Zacchaeus had probably heard many things about Jesus, now, however, he experienced that love and acceptance firsthand.

The only surprise in this situation would be if he did not hurry down from the branch where he was sitting.

Luke was very sensitive to the responses of people. This is obvious in this instance.

All the people saw this and began to mutter. "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." Luke 19:7

The reaction of the crowd was understandable, but not desirable. They saw Jesus as a man of purity and holiness, but now He has invited Himself to be the guest of one of the worst sinners in the land. The Pharisees would never do a thing like that. They conveyed the image of being isolated from such people. Jesus intentionally violated this custom trying to show that God loves even the worst possible sinner though He is offended by the person's sin. Everyone who was present would be scandalized by what Jesus did. They would expect Him not only to be clean, but to remain separated from anyone who was not clean. This was just contrary to His design for His life. The people would also be scandalized because they knew the consequences of what Jesus did. Because they thought of tax collectors as unpardonable sinners, they considered anyone who had any unnecessary dealings with them to also be a traitor and blasphemer. This automatically removed from them the privilege of serving as a judge or witness in any court, for any reason for the rest of their lives. We will deal with this again in later chapters. Luke used the word "mutter" which is "diagonguzo" - "διαγογγύζω" which is indignant complaining which goes through the crowd. This is the same word Luke used in Acts. The Grecian Jews complained that their widows were not receiving adequate care and the Hebrew widows were.

It sounds like the events took place one right after the other. That probably was not so. Jesus had invited Himself to be the house guest of Zacchaeus and as such there would be a festive dinner in His honor. The prostitutes, thieves and murderers, who were the only friends Zacchaeus had, were on hand for this great occasion. In the midst of it all, Zacchaeus decided to make an announcement.

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Luke 19:8

Zacchaeus called Jesus "Lord." In the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, the word Lord, "kurios" - "kuvrio"" was used to translate the divine name "adonai." This is the title for God that stresses His mastery over our lives. It also identifies Him as one who sustains a deep personal relationship with His servants. This says a lot about both Zacchaeus and about God.

These sinful friends of Zacchaeus had been shocked and scandalized by seeing Jesus come into the home of Zacchaeus. Now they are scandalized again by the announcement he made. Everybody knew that this man was a greedy thief. He overcharged everybody. He didn't care what happened so long as he could gain more wealth. Now in one moment, he gives half of it away to the poor. This man had probably not given anything to anybody in his entire adult life. Suddenly he volunteers to give half his possessions to the poor whom he had taken advantage of for years.

As if that were not enough, he made another promise that had to shock everyone present. This just was not like him at all. Zachariah said "IF I have cheated anybody . . .

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" there was no doubt in the minds of the people present that he had cheated everyone who ever came through the town. The second shocking thing about this latter promise was the amount of restitution he was willing to pay. Did you ever wonder about that? There were strict laws about what a thief had to pay in restitution. In Leviticus there are careful instructions about such things.

*The Lord said to Moses: "If anyone sins and is unfaithful to the Lord by deceiving his neighbor about something entrusted to him or left in his care or stolen, or if he cheats him, . . . When he thus sins and becomes guilty, he must return what he has stolen or taken by extortion, or what was entrusted to him or the lost property he found, or whatever it was he swore falsely about. He must make restitution in full, **add a fifth** of the value to it and give it all to the owner on the day he presents his guilt offering . . . "*
Leviticus 6:1-5

The penalty here is 20% plus a ram. The most that can be required is double the value of the theft. This is a long way from what Zacchaeus voluntarily promised to do for those whom he had wronged.

In Exodus there is a legal instruction concerning a thief.

If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.
Exodus 22:1

This is a very special case where the animal cannot be returned. In those instances the level of restitution is very high, but otherwise it is either twice the value or with simple theft, 20%.

Roman law required that the thief restore three times the value of what he had stolen. There were no conditions under which the thief would be required to pay four times the value of the material stolen.

Some attribute the offer of Zacchaeus to extreme generosity or guilt. I believe he was being generous, but that was not his motive. It appears that he wanted to give more than either the Jewish or Roman law required so that clearly his restitution was genuine. No one could say that he took the easy way out. He had been extremely greedy. He now wanted to be as generous as he had been greedy. It seems obvious that his attempt to repay did not have ulterior motives. Add to that the fact that he had already promised to give half his goods to the poor. It appears that restitution was far more than adequate to what he had taken falsely.

Luke records the beautiful response of Jesus to this surprising offer.

Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." Luke 19:9, 10

The people nearby were scandalized repeatedly throughout this event. The account closes with what was for some the most flagrant scandal of all. Jesus said that salvation had come to the house of Zacchaeus on that day. This was scandalous for many people, especially the Pharisees, because they believed that a tax collector could not be saved and could not be forgiven. This was a common teaching of the Pharisees and the Rabbis.

Nevertheless, Jesus scandalized them all by saying that this unforgivable man was totally forgiven.

Certainly Zacchaeus had heard people say repeatedly that he was an unforgivable traitor and blasphemer. Put yourself in his place for a minute. Against a background of all this unforgiveness you hear Jesus say, "Today salvation has come to this house . . . " Imagine how you would feel at that moment! Could you find words to adequately express the release, the joy the holy exuberance that races through your being as the meaning of His words penetrate your thinking? !

There is a contrast between chapters 18 and 19 that can go unnoticed. The rich ruler was invited to give away his belongings, but could not bring himself to do it. Zacchaeus was probably just as wealthy, but he was able to give it away. While choosing God over riches, Zacchaeus received the salvation of which Jesus was speaking and the rich ruler was seeking.

Jesus added a comment that causes some confusion for people. He said,

"Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. " Luke 19:9

What does Jesus mean by this statement? Zacchaeus is no more or less Jewish now than he was when Jesus invited him to come down from the tree. It was not the man's Jewishness of which Jesus was speaking. Salvation came to that house on that day because zacchaeus was able to choose God ahead of his possessions. Having chosen God ahead of all his previous priorities, Jesus was now describing the man as a son of Abraham, which is true of every believer.

In verse ten, Jesus offers a reason for what He had just said.

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. " Luke 19:10

Jesus' reference to Himself as the Son of Man was a way of identifying Himself as deity. The reason that Zacchaeus became a son of Abraham was that Jesus, the Son of Man, came to seek and save the lost. The gifts that Zacchaeus promised did not make him a Son of Abraham. He was of Jewish extraction before Jesus came to his home. The Son of Abraham, of which Jesus spoke, has to do with his redemption rather than his national origin.

The Son of Man came to "**Seek** and to save what was lost." Seeking does not mean that something was misplaced. The word "seek" is "zeteo" - "ζετέω" and means to pursue like a scientist pursues the cause of a disease. It is the same word Jesus used when he said,

"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" Matthew 7:33

The drive of Jesus' life was to search after the lost and win them back to God. He left no expenditure of effort undone trying to reach the lost for God.

He came to "seek and to **save** what was lost." "Save" is a way to describe our salvation. It does not mean that we have been misplaced. Our lives have been transformed and we not only have different works, but different reasons for everything that we are and do.

Jesus came for those who are **lost**. Being "lost" involves being killed, being utterly destroyed. This was the main idea in the three parables in chapter 15 - the lost sheep, the

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lost coin and the lost sons. Jesus was saying that He spent time with the publicans and sinners because they were spiritually lost. They were destroyed in their spirit and relationship with God.

19:11-27 - The Parable of the Mina's

Jesus makes it clear that this parable grows out of his encounter with Zacchaeus.

*While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable . . .
Luke 19:11a*

In other words, the people heard Jesus teaching Zacchaeus this parable. Whatever the content that is coming, it is an integral part of what Jesus was teaching Zacchaeus and his friends at this dinner at the home of Zacchaeus.

Again, Jesus suggested what His purpose was in telling this parable. This is the way He described the situation:

While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable. This was because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. Luke 19:11

Apparently people thought that because Jesus was close to Jerusalem and because it was the time of Passover, when the Messiah was to reveal himself, they thought that now was the time when He would stage a political coup and drive out the Romans. Jesus was trying to straighten out their understanding.

Jesus begins by describing the man in question.

"A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return." Luke 19:12

To our knowledge, no other parable of Jesus was founded on a historical event. When Jesus spoke, the listeners would immediately know the event of which He spoke. Upon his death, Herod the Great willed his realm to his three sons - Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Herod Philip. The people knew that Archelaus went to Rome to persuade Augustus to allow him to receive his inheritance. An actual delegation was sent to Rome, by the enemies of Archelaus, to protest this possibility before the emperor, Augustus. He did confirm the inheritance of Archelaus, but did not allow him to be called "king." Archelaus did bring his enemies before his throne and put them to death. Jesus used a political event, with which they were all-familiar, to explain a greater spiritual truth.

Jesus used this historical event to give his hearers some impression of the kind of person of which He was speaking. The man was from a ruling family, but that does not mean that he was well qualified. The people could fill in the blanks. Archelaus began his rule about the time of Jesus' birth. This ruler had attacked the Jews at the temple because they were making trouble. Nearly 3,000 Jews were killed. After less than ten years of his rule, the Emperor banished him to what is now Vienna. Jesus was not so much speaking out against the likes of Archelaus as He was describing the kind of ruler he was using in the parable. Nevertheless, the similarity to Archelaus was unmistakable.

Jesus described the actions of this abusive king.

"So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work, ' he said, ' until I come back.'" Luke 19:13

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

The "mina," of which Jesus spoke, was roughly equivalent to three months' wages. That means that the king gave each of his ten servants approximately two and a half year's wages to invest. Notice that the instructions were clear, "Put this money to work, until I come back."

Verse 14 is a parenthesis that was intended to give additional information about the character of this hated king. Jesus said,

"But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We do not want this man to be our king.'" Luke 19:14

True to the historical facts, a delegation did go to Rome to make this request. Unfortunately, for them, Augustus apparently felt that if the Jews hated Archelaus, then perhaps he could do some good in controlling the land. That was a miscalculation and the tensions rose rather than subsided.

Much to the consternation of the Jews, Archelaus was made a ruler and returned to Palestine to begin his rule.

Returning to His narrative in the parable, Jesus said these words,

"Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it." Luke 19:15

It was not uncommon for a person in political power to use this means to discover which of his potential aides could be trusted with great responsibility. This is apparently what happened in this instance. The announced purpose of this accounting was to see how much they had gained while he was away.

Jesus now described the accounting process.

"The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.'" Luke 19:16

Obviously the ruler had been gone for many months on his trip. This voyage and business matters at his destination consumed a lot of time. During that time, the servant had multiplied the value of the 10 mina's to become 100 minas.

In the story Jesus taught, the ruler was very pleased with this report.

"Well done, my good servant! ' His master replied. "Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities." Luke 19:17

The master called the servant "good servant" because he had done what the master told him to do and had done it with excellence. The Lord of that slave then repaid the servant for what he had done. Remember that this was a slave, his master did not have to do anything because the servant had been faithful, but Jesus portrayed the master in this good light. The repayment was that because the servant had been faithful with a very small responsibility, the master was now going to give him control over ten cities. Two and a half years wages is no small responsibility. It is very small, however, in comparison to the rule over ten cities which the master gave to his faithful slave. The application of the announced purpose is not entirely clear in these verses, but it will be by the end of the parable. Many were very concerned about when the kingdom of God would come. Jesus

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poses the issue, not in when the kingdom will come, but who will be faithful when it does come?

Jesus then described the experience of a second slave.

"The second came and said, 'Your mina has earned five more.'"
Luke 19:18

The master had instructed the slave to invest the money. The slave had done as directed and had multiplied the trust of his master five times. It does not appear that there is a significance to the numbers ten, five and one other than the fact that one was very productive and the last was not productive at all.

Naturally, Jesus followed this with a report of what the master of that servant did.

"His master answered, 'you take charge of five cities.'" Luke 19:19

The text is not clear about whether the master also said to this second servant, "well done, good servant." It appears to me that he probably had. Jesus' emphasis was that when the servant did as commanded, the master honored the servant. The honor given by the master was commensurate with the extent of the servant's faithfulness and ability.

Jesus then tells us of the experiences of a third servant.

"Then another servant came and said, 'sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.'" Luke 19:20, 21

Remember, Jesus said this was the kind of ruler that the people did not want to rule over them. This man was apparently one who shared that opinion of the ruler. In his comment to the master, the servant attempted to describe how careful he was to insure the safety of his master's property.

Jesus approaches the climax of the story in strong form.

"His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?'" Luke 19:22, 23

The master used the words that the servant used to justify his actions as the indictment of that servant. The master describes the slave as "wicked servant." The word used for "wicked" is "poneros" - "πονηρός", which is a very strong word. There are two other words which are more delicate and less abrasive which are also translated wicked. This is to say that the master was really angry and thought little of the servant.

The servant thought he was doing sufficiently to protect his master's property. The master had not told him to protect it, but to take the risk of investing the money. This servant's punishment was the result of disobedience. The platitudes about protecting his owners property cannot hide the fact that the servant was disobedient to the expressed wishes of his master.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Notice that even in his anger, the master gave the servant an opportunity to explain his disobedience. There is no record, in the parable, that the servant was able to answer his master concerning this issue.

Jesus has told the whole story so as to come to this particular point.

"Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.'" Luke 19:24

Notice that the punishment was that the servant lost the privilege of responsibility entrusted to him. He did not lose his life or his place in the household. The mina that the disobedient servant had hidden was given to the most skillful, obedient servant.

Jesus continued with the story as He taught the crowd.

"Sir," they said, 'He already has ten!' " Luke 19:25

Since the text does not say, we can only assume that "they" is a reference to other servants. Their complaint was that the recipient already had ten minas and now the master takes a servant's single mina and adds it to the faithful servant's abundance.

The master responds to their inquiry,

"He replied, " tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away." Luke 19:26

This is a picture of firm justice. The faithful will be blessed with more than they had. The unfaithful will lose even the little bit that they have. The rightness of this is to be found in the fact that no servant need be unfaithful.

Verse 27 begins with the word "but." This is an indication that there is a strong contrast in the content which follows.

"But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them - bring them here and kill them in front of me. " Luke 19:27

As indicated earlier, this harks back to a real historical experience about which they were all knowledgeable. Using this as a platform, Jesus, again, goes on to teach additional truth about the kingdom of God.

Remember, at the beginning of this parable, Luke suggested the purpose of this parable. It was a teaching tool for those who believed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. Throughout the story, the emphasis was not on just how soon the king would return to reign in his new responsibilities. Repeatedly, the emphasis was on obedience. Judgment came upon the servant who did not do what his master instructed him to do. Honor came to the servant who did just as his master instructed. Even greater honor came to the servant who not only did as he was instructed but carried out his instructions with great skill. Our concern should not be when the kingdom will come, but how can I improve the manner in which I show my obedience to my master.

19:28-40 The Triumphal Entry

This account is also found in Matthew 21:1-9 and Mark 11:1-10. We should notice that this is one of a very few places in the Gospel of Luke which is specific in terms of both time and place. This is in part because we are coming to the part of the book which is most crucial to the purposes of the author - the trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

JESUS' TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

We need to state, at the outset, that there are several culturally significant pieces of information in this paragraph. These pieces of information identify Jesus both as the Messiah and as a king. We will attempt to identify these and explain their significance as we go through the segment.

Luke begins by picking up the conversation immediately following the parable of the ten minas.

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

Luke 19:28

This brief sentence gives several pieces of information. Jesus has left Jericho and has started up the steep road from Jericho to Jerusalem. This road climbs about one foot in every 32 feet, going from below sea level to 2,500 feet above sea level in the fifteen miles from Jericho to Jerusalem. As He climbs, Jesus was apparently teaching, though we do not know what He taught. As He came near the end of this 15-mile walk, He started to arrange for the triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here." Luke 19:29, 30

There is reason to believe that though He has could walk the twelve miles from Jericho to Bethphage, Sabbath is beginning and the group can only walk a Sabbath day's journey from this point. It is interesting that there is a record of some arguments among the Rabbis about how far one can walk on the Sabbath. After much wrangling, it was determined that they could walk as far as Bethphage from the temple in Jerusalem.

It is also interesting that Jesus decided to ride the rest of the way into the city on the colt of a donkey. In Matthew's account of this event, he quotes from the prophets:

Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Matthew 21:5, as quoted from Zechariah 9:9

It appears that Jesus is knowingly claiming the symbol of the Messiah which had been foretold by Zechariah. He knew and so did all the other Jews that this was one of the signs for which they had been watching. Add to this the fact that one of the understandings of their culture was also in play. If a king was going out to battle, he would ride a white horse. If he was returning in peace, however, he would not ride a horse at all, but would ride a white donkey.

We need to look carefully at what we think of when we think of a donkey. We envision a stubborn animal that cannot be depended upon for anything except a pack animal for a gold prospector. That is a culturalism that does not apply. The donkey was a good means of transportation in that area. It was in no way demeaning for a king to ride on a donkey.

One of the miracles of this journey was that Jesus told them where they would find the donkey and that is exactly where they found it. This miracle could get lost in the flood of other information surrounding this experience.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They replied, "The Lord needs it." Luke 19:32-34

Jesus told them where they would find the animal. He also told them what to say when they were challenged for releasing the animal to bring it to him. They did just as Jesus had told them and were able to bring the colt to Him. This is as miraculous as healing a blind man.

Luke continues to detail the events leading up to this monumental symbolic entrance into the city.

They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. Luke 19:35, 36

You will note, in Matthew 21, that the people spread both their cloaks and cut palm branches on the ground before Jesus. The palm branch was the symbol of nationalism in Israel. During these times Rome minted a coin for Israel. On the face of the coin was an engraved picture. In the center of the coin was a large palm branch. On one side was an image of a huge Roman soldier. On the other side was an image of a little Jewish woman bowing before the Roman soldier. That was what Rome thought of Jewish nationalism. The Jews waved palm branches and placed them on the ground in front of Jesus. This was a very risky symbol. It suggested that they were convinced Jesus had come to restore Israel and rid them of the Roman scourge.

Every Jew and Roman would understand when they saw the clothes on the animal, the clothes and palm branches spread out in the road ahead of the animal. These people were treating Jesus like royalty. Remember that this is an area under the control of Rome. Any displays of this nature would be met with firm reprisals. It was very daring for Jesus to ride right into the center of the city, right within sight of the royal palace in this fashion. It was just as daring for the people to make these gestures. It has to reflect the fact that these people were convinced that this, indeed, was the Messiah for whom they had been waiting.

Anyone reading this report, who had been to Jerusalem, would immediately recognize the place to which Luke was referring. His report is very precise.

When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: Luke 19:37

The east side of the Kidron Valley, on which Jesus was riding, is quite steep at this point. The grade might be between 45 and 50 degrees. Was their outburst of praise spontaneous? The text does not say, but it appears that it was. It is as though the number of miracles that had recently taken place was penetrating their minds. When they reached the crest of the hill to descend into the Kidron valley, they burst forth into praise to God.

Luke records some of the things that the crowd cried as they moved toward the Beautiful Gate of the city of Jerusalem. By the way, the Jewish people expected that the Messiah would enter the city through this gate. There is absolutely no doubt that these Jewish people were aware of that and it had to form a part of their praise to God.

Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" Luke 19:38a as quoted from Psalm 118:26

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Think of this statement for a minute. These people are walking along with Jesus. He was riding on a donkey. The people are strewing clothes and palm branches in front of Him. They are shouting "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" Do you think for a moment that this information escaped the ears of the Roman rulers? Imagine the courage it took for everyone involved to make this statement of their faith in God and His coming Messiah. This is almost too awesome to believe, but it did happen.

In Matthew's account of this experience, he records something that the crowd sang before the quotation from Psalm 118:26. Matthew adds this information.

*The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted.
"Hosanna to the Son of David!" Matthew 21:9a,b*

For us, the word "Hosanna" has become an exclamation of great praise. It was not so in Israel then. The word "hosanna" - "wJsannav" is a transliteration from the Hebrew and meant "save, we pray." Imagine the courage it took for Jewish people to shout "Hosanna" as they walked through the streets of Jerusalem toward the palace of the governor.

Notice also that Matthew suggests that they shouted these words to Jesus, the "Son of David." Everyone who heard it would be aware of the fact that David was the king. To call Jesus "the Son of David" would be to refer to Him in kingly reference. This is another very risky action by these Jewish people.

In Luke 13:35, as Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem, these words again with all their fervor. The closer they came to the city, the bolder they were with their praise. It was certain death for any Jewish person to speak of a king of Israel. Indeed, when the Pharisees were trying to make trouble for Jesus with Roman officials, they falsely charged Jesus with claiming to be the king of Israel. The last part of the cry of praise from the crowd is a quote from the message sung by the heavenly host as they sang to the shepherds. Their message in song of praise only accentuates the fact that Jesus was riding on a donkey as an additional sign that His mission was one of peace.

Luke records the conclusion of their shouted praise by saying

"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Luke 19:38b

Again, at the conclusion of his report of this shouting of praise, Matthew adds again,

"Hosanna in the highest!" Matthew 21:9c

Though it may not seem that way, this was an even stronger statement because of the words "in the highest." This is a direct reference to God. It is a more forthright statement about Jesus as Messiah than those which were previously made. The meaning of Hosanna - Save we pray - makes this an even more poignant statement.

Luke adds a statement about the response of the Pharisees and teachers who were observing the whole proceeding.

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" Luke 19:39

The disciples and the crowd were shouting things that confirmed that they believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of David. The Pharisees were not looking for quiet in the midst of a screaming match. They wanted Jesus to denounce what they were saying as

untrue. They wanted Him to deny that He was the Messiah. The word "rebuke" - "epitimao" "ἐπιτιμάω" - means to rebuke as Jesus rebuked the evil spirits that controlled the helpless. It is to control the wrong; to denounce all evil activity and forbid it to be repeated. Jesus could not satisfy their request because He knew that the people were indicating the truth.

Notice how Jesus responded to the demand of the Pharisees.

*"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."
Luke 19:40.*

Remember where Jesus was at the time he made this statement. To the best of our understanding, He was coming down the west side of the Mount of Olives into the Kidron Valley directly opposite the gate beautiful. There is stone there, but nothing substantial. On the west side of the valley, however, is the massive structure of the Beautiful Gate. In the gate and the walls that are adjacent to it, there are huge ashlers. These are massive pieces of stone that could only be moved and put in place with mechanical means. I am convinced that it was to these that Jesus was referring, not to some small stones along the road.

Jesus was saying that if all the people were absolutely quiet, it would not silence the announcement that the Pharisees did not want to hear. The silence of people would only release the huge stones of the foundation the wall and the gate to also announce that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of David. It is futile to try to deny the miracle God has done.

19:41-44 - Jesus Wept over Jerusalem

This brief paragraph contains the extremes of Jesus' emotional strain. He goes from deep remorse to the pronouncement of prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. Notice the way Luke described the event:

*As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said . . .
Luke 19:41*

The word "approach" "engidzo" "ἐγγίζω" means to get closer as a frightened child crowds close to his parent. There was an eagerness in Jesus' coming closer to the great city.

Luke tells us, "and saw the city . . ." There is a place, on that hill, where you do not see the city and then you turn a corner and suddenly you can see the city from east to west. It is a gorgeous sight. As Jesus stood overlooking the detail of the city He began to weep over it. The word "weep" klaio" "κλαίω" is the word used to describe a very loud expression of grief. It is the word that is used to describe intense mourning for the dead in Luke 7:13 when the widow was leaving the city bury her son. There had to be many reasons for His sorrow. Certainly one was the fact that the magnificence of the city would one day be totally destroyed. What he could see, would not be seen any more.

The source of Jesus' tears had to be this, but much more as He explains. He spoke to the city through His tears.

*"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace
- but now it is hidden from your eyes." Luke 19:42*

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There is deep pain in Jesus' words. It is as though He had said, "If only you had known..." It is the great pain of what might have been. Jesus was touched with the irony of the name of the city. It is the city of peace, but it was destined to be anything but peaceful.

Jesus talked about the truth being hidden from the eyes of the city. They faced dangers they were unable to grasp. Jesus begins to talk about what lay in the future of the city.

*"The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side."
Luke 19:43*

The walls of the great cities were built to keep the enemy out. Jesus was saying that the enemies of Jerusalem would build a wall, apparently a wall of dirt. Instead of keeping an enemy out this wall would keep the people of the city on the inside. They will be totally encircled and cannot escape.

Jesus continued with His prophetic announcement.

"They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." Luke 19:44

In the graphic prophetic announcement Jesus was saying that the people would be killed. A greater tragedy still is that their children would be killed within the walls of the city. This was the ultimate tragedy because if the children are killed, then there is no heritage for the people; the names and families will die out and this is the ultimate disgrace that could happen to a Jewish man.

When Jesus spoke of not one stone being on top of another. It is a way of graphically describing the extent of the devastation. In this instance, however, it was apparently not a graphic description, but a picture of reality. There are reports that they were able, after the fall of Jerusalem, to take an ox and plough and make a furrow completely across the entire city of Jerusalem. It is a way of describing just how thoroughly devastated the city was.

Jesus did not just tell them the bad news. He attempted to help them understand just why this happened. Jesus said,

*"...because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."
Luke 19:44*

Jesus was not trying to say that the destruction came because they were surprised. They were not surprised. They were so preoccupied with their own agenda they did not look to see if God would do as He had said He would. In the past God had told them He would destroy; Jesus had been telling them that judgment would come, but they were too preoccupied to take it seriously. They did not have spiritual eyes to see or spiritual ears to hear what God was doing in their time. This is a common ailment. People are so busy living that they do not take time to see what God's agenda is in the midst of their preoccupation with their selfish agendas.

19:45-48 - The Cleansing of the Temple

This message is found in all three of the Synoptic Gospels. There are some very significant bits of information in these five verses.

Then he entered the temple area and began driving out those who were selling. Luke 19:45

As you may remember, Jesus came into the city like a king returning triumphantly from battle. This was a very intentional image that Jesus wanted to convey. When a king returns from battle in victory, he goes immediately to the palace and to the throne room to reestablish his authority. He has been away in battle, and it is important for everyone to know who is in charge again. Jesus returned to the city like a conquering king, but he did not go to the palace or to the throne room, but to the temple. The agenda of Jesus did not have anything to do with political and military power that occupied the attention of kings. Jesus went immediately to the temple. This was His throne and this was always His preoccupation. His throne was the mercy seat, not the cushion upon a stone or ivory chair. His power came from the place of worship, not the place where wars were designed and deceptions polished.

Upon His return to the temple, Jesus did something that would have shocked most any Jewish person. It was well known that those who sold sacrifices and exchanged money did so with the permission and financial benefit of the priestly community. The priests had full control over what happened within the temple complex. It was safe to assume that the priests would defend anything that was allowed to happen within the complex. This including the sale of sacrifices and the exchange of money, from which they profited handsomely.

We must also remember that both the sale of sacrifices and the exchange of money were contrary to the teaching of the law. The imposition of unjust usury was contrary to the teaching of the law. The priestly community had a monopoly on the animals that could be sold for use as sacrifices. They had their own flocks for the provision of sacrificial animals. A person could bring their own animal, but even this would have to be approved by a priest. That would seldom happen. The pilgrims who came from long distances could not bring their own animals. They were forced to pay many times the value of an animal in order to make a sacrifice.

Israel was under the control of Rome. Rome produced the only currency that could be used in the realm. In each instance, Roman coins bore the image of an emperor who was considered a deity. This currency could not be used in the temple. Pilgrims would have to exchange their Roman money for temple currency before they could enter the temple or purchase the sacrificial animal. The exchange charged for this service was exorbitant, but there was no other alternative for these people from foreign lands.

Jesus conducts Himself differently in the closing chapters of the Gospel than He has throughout the rest of the book. Here Jesus attacks the corrupt system. He drove the salesmen out of the temple area. We should understand that these salesmen and money changers were not in the temple proper, but were within the temple complex.

Matthew tells us a bit more detail about this experience.

Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. " Matthew 21:12

Jesus entered the "temple **area**" not the temple proper. The word for "drove out" in both Matthew and Luke is "ekballo" "ἐκβάλλω." It means to drive forth with the use of force, to throw out, it is used to describe the driving of cattle with force.

JESUS' TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

Even in this picture of Jesus being anything but passive, there is a glimpse of mercy. Notice that it says that he overturned the **tables** of the money changers, but that He overturned the **benches** of those who sold doves. If He had overturned the tables of the dove salesmen, there would have been many dead birds. In the height of His fury over the abuse of the house of God, there was still an expression of mercy and kindness.

Mark also adds a bit of information that was not included by Luke.

*On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, **and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.**" Mark 11:15, 16*

If you were carrying a heavy parcel from the northeast part of Jerusalem to the southwest part, it was a long draining task. If you could go through the temple complex, it would not be nearly as difficult and would take much less time. Thus, people started using the temple complex as a shortcut from one part of the city to another. Everyone knew that it should not be done. It seems certain that they felt quite helpless to do anything about it. The temple complex was being used as a convenience for the people and a lucrative money source for the priestly community. It was not recognized as a place set aside exclusively for the worship of the God of Israel.

Jesus explained what he had done in these words:

"It is written," he said to them, 'My house will be a house of prayer' but you have made it 'a den or robbers.'" Luke 19:46

For some, this seems like an interesting statement that Jesus put together Himself. That is not really the case.

Jesus was in fact quoting from two different Old Testament passages.

*These will I bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my **house of prayer.** Isaiah 56:7*

Jesus was describing a place where people were drawn to each other and to God. Jesus was saying that it must **again** become a place of prayer, not a place of unfair commerce.

The second quotation comes from the prophecy of Jeremiah:

*Has this house, which bears my Name, become **a den of robbers** to you? But I have been watching! Declares the Lord. Jeremiah 7:11*

Apparently Jesus chose to quote this verse because it pointedly describes what was really happening by the sales of animals and the exchange of Roman currency for temple currency within the temple.

Why would not just one of these two passages have been sufficient? Throughout the ministry of Jesus, He followed a pattern in His teaching. He would state the truth that he wanted to convey and then support it with at least two quotations from the Old Testament. The Biblical reason for this also comes from the Old Testament.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

*On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.
Deuteronomy 17:6*

It was for this reason that the disciples were sent out by two's. Add to this the fact that if Scripture was appealed to for support, the opposition could not challenge the Scriptures used in such a defense.

Luke continues with the description of this dramatically changed approach of Jesus as He confronts the Pharisees.

*Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him.
Luke 19:47*

Notice the contrast in this verse. Jesus is right out in the open teaching "at" the temple. Luke accurately suggests that it was "at" the temple, rather than "in" the temple. There was a massive set of steps at the site of the temple where the great Rabbis taught their disciples and anyone else who wanted to listen. It is apparently at this location that Jesus was teaching. This is where everyone would expect Him to teach. The tempo of His ministry has been stepped up a great deal. Simultaneously, the religious leaders are trying to stay under cover and at the same time find some way to put Jesus to death. Jesus was succeeding in His very open approach and the religious leaders were failing in their clandestine effort. Notice that the concerned parties now include "Chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people." On other occasions these same people might not get along too well. Here, however, they are bound together by a common hatred of Jesus and a desire to find a way to rid themselves of His presence.

Luke carefully documents the frustration of the religious leaders in their attempt to get rid of Jesus.

Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words. Luke 19:48

This is frustration of the worst sort. They were the ones known for their righteousness, but they were failing in an attempt to commit murder. Jesus was attacked by them because He attempted to share the message of God for their lives. He survived and accomplished the will of His Father for these people who did not know the will of God. Luke was not saying that the religious leaders were a total failure. For the time being they were trying harder and accomplishing less.

There is another quiet, seemingly insignificant report that carries great significance. Luke says that the people all hung on Jesus' every word. This is just one more way of saying that the common witness of this large crowd was far more than the necessary two or three witnesses to establish truth. The witness of their attention would carry great weight in any investigation concerning the things that He taught.

Conclusion

When Jesus reached Jericho, on His way to Jerusalem, His whole ministry took a more direct turn than it had in the past three and a half years. The pace picked up; the confrontation was more direct; the message was much more unmistakable.

JESUS' TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

He took a bolder stand concerning the people that society said were failures. He invited himself to the home of Zacchaeus, despite the consequence that He could never be a judge or witness in court the rest of His life.

In the parable of the minas, Jesus was dealing with what was of ultimate concern rather than the things that occupy the attention of people every day.

There is a directness to what Jesus did as He came to the city of Jerusalem for His final week before the crucifixion. The witness to His being the Son of God was far more direct and obvious than it had ever been before. The only way in which Jesus was not totally out in the open with this was that He was simply careful not to be put to death for violating a Roman law against treason. He needed to be able to die for the right reason.

In the midst of His attack on the religious establishment, Jesus displayed the deep concern that He had for the city. This city had more reason to believe than most anyone else. Down through the centuries, however, they had been harsher and more destructive to the prophets than any other place. In spite of it all, Jesus wept as He looked at the rebellious city.

As a final confrontation of the religious establishment, Jesus attacked their financial arrangements. These policies made the priestly community rich, but totally frustrated the desire of God that His house be a place of prayer, a place where people are drawn together and to God.

Look again at these issues. Unfortunately, down through the ages people have not changed that much. One of the expressions of good news is the fact that God also does not change. When people are being their disobedient selves, God, in Jesus Christ, is busy weeping over their rebellion, extending His mercy over their willfulness.

Think for a few moments about your life. What hope does this give you? How does this change the way you think about your life? How does it affect your relationship to God?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 22

LUKE 20:1-47

JESUS CHALLENGED BY RELIGIOUS LEADERS

1. In our best Greek manuscripts, there are six paragraphs in Luke chapter 20. On the table below, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

20:1-8	
20:9-19	
20:20-26	
20:27-40	
20:41-44	
20:45-47	

2. In Luke 20:1-8, the religious leaders challenged Jesus' authority.
- In 20:1, who challenged Jesus? What does that tell you?
 - What question did the religious leaders ask Jesus?
 - Why would that be important?
 - In 20:3, 4, what was Jesus' answer to their question?
 - If you were one of the religious leaders, how would you feel when you heard Jesus' answer?
 - Why did the religious leaders need to discuss their answer before replying to Jesus' question?
 - In 20:7, the religious leaders gave a surprising answer to Jesus' question.
 - What was the answer they gave?
 - What is there about this answer that was so shocking?
 - What, if anything, was wrong with that answer?
 - In 20:8, Jesus responded to their answer.
 - What did Jesus respond?
 - What was the implications of Jesus' answer?
 - How would the people who listened respond to Jesus' answer?
3. In Luke 20:9-19, Jesus used the parable of the evil vineyard keepers.
- What are the facts of this story?
 - Why did Jesus tell this story?
 - Study 20:9 carefully.
 - What does it mean?
 - What is the importance of this information?
 - In 20:10, Jesus continues the parable.
 - What does this verse add to the story?
 - Why did the owner send a servant to the tenants?
 - What was the significance of the tenants treatment of the servant in this verse?

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

- e. In 20:11, the owner sent another servant.
 - (1). Compare the treatment of the servant, in 20:11, with that recorded in 20:10. What did you learn from this comparison?
 - (2). What is the significance of the tenant's abuse of the servant in 20:11?
- f. In 20:12, a third servant was sent.
 - (1). Compare the treatment of this servant with that recorded in 20:10, 11.
 - (2). What is the significance of the tenant's abuse of the servant in 20:12?
- g. In 20:13, the owner sent his son to the tenants.
 - (1). What does this tell you about the owner?
 - (2). What does this tell you about the tenants?
- h. In 20:14-16, Jesus describes the tenant's treatment of the son.
 - (1). Why is the discussion about the heir important? What ingredient does it add to the story?
 - (2). In 20:15, 16a, Jesus describes the owner's response to the killing of his son. Why is this response different from the tenant's abuse of the three servants?
 - (3). In 20:16b, Jesus described the reaction of His listeners to the parable He told.
 - (a). What was their response?
 - (b). What was the emotional response to this response?
 - (c). What did they mean by it?
- i. What does the story of sending three servants and a son tell you that the story of the first servant did not?
- j. In 20:17, Jesus responds to His listener's response.
 - (1). Has the emotional tone increased or decreased? In what way?
 - (2). In this verse, Jesus uses the image of a "capstone". What was Jesus saying by this reference?
 - (3). What is the consequence of Jesus' statement?
- l. In 20:19, Luke described the reaction of the religious leaders.
 - (1). Put yourself in the place of these religious leaders. How would you feel?
 - (2). How serious was the situation created by this encounter?
 - (3). Luke tells us that the powerful religious leaders were afraid of the common people. How can you explain this?
- 4. In Luke 20:20-26, Jesus was challenged concerning the payment of taxes to Caesar.
 - a. How would you describe the tactics used by the Jewish leaders in Luke 20:20?
 - b. What does this say about these men?
 - c. In 20:21, the religious leaders gave a description of Jesus.
 - (1). How did they describe Him?
 - (2). How do you evaluate that description?
 - (3). What does this say about the men involved?
 - (4). Why was this necessary?
 - d. In 20:22, the leaders challenged Jesus with a sensitive question.
 - (1). What was the question?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 22

- (2). Why was this question sensitive?
- (3). What risks did the leaders take in asking this question?
- (4). What risk did Jesus take in answering the question?
- e. In Luke 20:20-23, there are at least eleven pieces of information about the religious leaders.

Study these verses carefully and record your findings on the table below.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.

- f. In Luke 20:24, Jesus responded to the sensitive question put to Him.
 - (1). How did Jesus respond?
 - (2). What purpose was served by Jesus' request for a coin?
 - (3). Why didn't Jesus use His own coin?
 - (4). In 20:24, Luke tells us "He saw through their duplicity." What does this mean?
- g. In Luke 20:25, Jesus answered their question.
 - (1). What did Jesus mean by His answer?
 - (2). There is a principle in Jesus' answer. How would you state this principle in modern terms?
- h. In Luke 20:26, Luke describes the situation which existed following Jesus' reply.
 - (1). If you were one of the religious leaders in this verse, how would you feel?
 - (2). This verse records **two** responses by the religious leaders to the answer Jesus gave.
 - (a). What were these responses?
 - (b). What was the significance of these responses?
- 5. In Luke 20:27-40, the Sadducees challenged Jesus about the resurrection.
 - a. In a Bible dictionary, find out what a Sadducee was.
 - b. What could the Sadducees hope to gain by the question they asked Jesus?
 - c. In Luke 20:29-33, the Sadducees told a strange tale of seven childless brothers.
 - (1). Why would this be so important to Sadducees?
 - (2). What could the Sadducees hope to gain by the question they asked Jesus?
 - d. In 20:34-38, Jesus responded to the Sadducees' question.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

- (1). How seriously did Jesus take their question?
 - (2). In 20:34, Jesus spoke of "this age" and in 20:35 He spoke of "that age." What did Jesus mean by each designation?
 - (3). What does Jesus' reference to the burning bush, from Exodus 3:6, have to do with the question about the resurrection?
 - (4). What was Jesus saying about marriage in Luke 20:35?
 - (5). In Luke 20:37, Jesus spoke of Moses calling the Lord "The God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." Why was this significant to this parable?
 - (6). In 20:38, Jesus makes an affirmation about God - "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." What was Jesus affirming?
 - (7). Jesus also said, "For to him all are alive..." Luke 20:38b. What does this mean?
 - (8). How would you summarize, in your own words, Jesus' response to the story of the seven brothers?
- e. In Luke 20:39, Luke records the response of one of the Teachers of the Law.
 - (1). What was his response?
 - (2). What did the response mean?
 - f. Luke tells us, in 20:40, that no one dared ask Jesus any more questions.
 - (1). Why would this be true?
 - (2). What did this mean?
 - (3). What effect, if any, would this have on the reputation of the Sadducees?
6. In 20:42-44, Jesus challenged the Sadducees about the name "Son of David."
 - a. What was Jesus' question?
 - b. What important idea was Jesus trying to convey with this question?
 - c. No response by the Sadducees, to Jesus' question, was recorded in the text. What does this suggest to you?
 7. In Luke 20:45-47, Jesus makes a direct attack on the Sadducees.
 - a. There are two general kinds of attacks that Jesus made at this time. What were they?
 - b. How does Jesus illustrate these charges?
 - c. If Jesus were making these charges in your community, how would He phrase them?
 - d. Why would Jesus infer that the long flowing robes of the Sadducees would make them dangerous?
 - e. What is there about greetings in the marketplace that is so bad?
 - f. What is so terrible about sitting in the most important seats in the synagogue?
 - g. Why would Jesus take a dim view of sitting in the places of honor at a banquet; someone has to sit there?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 22

- h. In verse 47, Jesus charges the Sadducees with "devouring widow's houses." What does He mean by this?
 - i. Jesus also charged the Sadducees with "praying long prayers." What charge is Jesus really making against them?
 - j. Jesus closed the paragraph with a very brief pronouncement.
 - (1). What did He say?
 - (2). What did He mean?
8. Read this chapter over several times.
- a. In what ways will it apply to our culture? Our community?
 - b. What can you do to take advantage of what you learned from this chapter?

LESSON 22: – LUKE 20:1-47

JESUS CHALLENGED BY RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Introduction

Our best Greek documents of the Gospel of Luke divide the chapter up into six paragraphs. They are as follows:

20:1-8	Religious Leaders Challenge Jesus' Authority
20:9-19	The Parable of the Evil Vineyard Keepers
20:20-26	Should We Pay Taxes to Caesar?
20:27-40	Sadducees Question Jesus About the Resurrection
20:41-44	Jesus Challenges Sadducees About "David's Son"
20:45-47	Jesus Warns People About the Scribes

We have come to the most crucial part of Luke's Gospel. The content of each of the six paragraphs in this chapter is found in all three Synoptic Gospel records. This gives some impression of just how significant this material is to the purposes of each writer.

20:1-8 - The Religious Leaders Challenge Jesus' Authority

You will note that in the closing chapters of this Gospel record, there is more confrontation and the tone of that confrontation is greatly intensified. In this paragraph, three different groups of religious leaders join to attack Him.

One day as he was teaching the people in the temple courts and preaching the gospel, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law, together with the elders, came up to him. Luke 20:1

These three groups make up most of the Sanheddrin. It is reasonable to believe that their question was formulated by the Sanheddrin itself rather than by the men present. In one sense it was both a reasonable question and reasonable for them to ask Him because the control of the temple and its use was their unique responsibility. No one else had a say in this matter. One must take note of their great restraint whether one agrees with them. It is entirely possible that their restraint was born of their fear rather than the quality of their character.

The closing chapters of the Gospel of Luke all take place within the confines of a single week. Nevertheless, Luke begins the chapter with an imprecise designation of time - "one day as he was teaching . . . " This has happened throughout the Gospel. The teaching and ministering of Jesus were far more important than the specific designation of time or place.

As Luke suggested in this verse, Jesus was teaching "in the temple courts." By this he meant the huge stairway, which is still there today, on which all the teachers and Rabbis taught. Luke suggests that Jesus also preached from this location. The other two synoptic Gospel records do not tell us about the preaching.

Three groups challenged Jesus in these words:

"Tell us by what authority you are doing these things," they said. "Who gave you this authority?" Luke 20:2

The first question with which we must deal is, what do the leaders mean by " . . . these things." The text does not say, but it appears that they are talking about what Jesus did to cleanse the temple. It is also possible they considered the teaching that He was doing currently. These two questions are similar, but they are different. One question asks the identity of the authority. The other question asks the source of that authority. These religious leaders had people following Jesus from the time He first became popular with the people. Jesus was both a frustration and a source of deep concern to the religious leadership. In a host of different situations and in many different ways, Jesus had claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God, but He had never used the words. They could not convict Him based on what He had already said and they knew it. They were, therefore, trying to get Him to speak much more plainly and implicate Himself. This is particularly obvious in the second question. They needed for Jesus to clearly say that he was the Son of God. Jesus, on the other hand, needed to be sure that when He died, it was for the sins of the people. It could not be for violating the Roman or Jewish law. Jesus did have authority to cleanse the temple because it belonged to His Father. That is precisely what they hoped that He would say. If He claimed to be the Son of God and that His Father gave Him the authority, then the religious leaders would accuse Him of blasphemy. For this cause, they could have Him put to death. It is quite certain that they were convinced that they had Him, no matter how He answered. That did not prove to be the case.

Jesus replied in a manner that was very Jewish and carefully understood by every person who was present. First, Jesus did not directly answer their question. Instead, Jesus answered their question with a different question. This question removed Jesus from the spot that He was in and placed the religious leaders on the same spot.

He replied, "I will also ask you a question. Tell me, John's baptism - was it from heaven, or from men?" Luke 20:3, 4

The genius of Jesus' question was its simplicity. It is a simple "either-or" choice. The problem with it was that they would be in trouble whichever choice they made and they knew it.

This was a problem for men who were supposed to be the experts in Jewish law in the whole nation. Suddenly an untutored Rabbi put them on the spot. Notice their response.

They discussed it among themselves and said, If we say, "from heaven," he will ask, "Why didn't you believe him?" But if we say, "from men," all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a prophet." Luke 20:5, 6

The religious leaders opposed the message of John the Baptist as strongly as they did that of Jesus. No matter which way they answered, they would implicate themselves. If they said that John's baptism was from heaven, then they would have to explain their opposition to John without standing against God. If they answered that it was from men, they feared that the people would stone them to death. This was because the common people were convinced that John was a prophet. It did not matter what their religious leaders thought. This is clear evidence that the people were taking a strong stand in conflict with their religious leaders and doing so in some strength. These rulers also feared that the people might hold the same strong feeling about Jesus and they were trying to thwart that by trying to discredit Him.

JESUS CHALLENGED BY RELIGIOUS LEADERS

When placed on such a spot, the religious leaders tried to take the easy way out.

So they answered, "We don't know where it was from." Luke 20:7

The problem with their easy answer was that it was false. They may not have liked the honest answer, but they certainly knew what it was. This was a serious problem for them. These people were committed to truth. They knew, full well, that any person who gave false witness should be stoned to death. In spite of this, they lied to Jesus rather than face the political suicide of their honest feelings about John.

Jesus was not confused by their falsehood. Notice how He replied to their response.

Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things." Luke 20:8

Jesus did not argue with their answer, He simply identified it for what it was - a lie. He was saying, "It is not that you do not know, it is rather that you will not tell me what you think." On that basis, I will not tell you the answer to the question you have asked. Put yourself in the place of the people who were standing by listening. Jesus, an untutored Rabbi, when He was put on the spot, successfully put His attackers on the same spot. They resorted to a dishonest response rather than risk telling the truth. There is no doubt that no matter what Jesus thought, these people were convinced, once again, that their religious leaders were breaking the ten commandments; doing things that the Torah clearly states should be punished by being stoned to death. That information was not lost on the crowd nor was it hidden from the religious leaders who were caught in their own trap.

20:9-19 - The Parable of the Evil Vineyard Keeper

It appears that this paragraph immediately follows, in time, that which precedes it. As happened so often, Jesus follows a teaching experience with a story, a parable. The teaching which precedes this passage dealt with some intense confrontation. Jesus had just driven the money changers and salesmen from the temple compound. Jesus had just entered into a heated debate with the religious leaders over the basis of His authority to do the things He had just done in the temple. There is a strong element of hostility and attack which permeated the air at this moment. It was in this atmosphere that Jesus told the following parable.

He went on to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time . . . " Luke 20:9

The exciting thing about the parables of Jesus is that they begin like any nice story. It is only later that the scandalizing message comes through. In this first verse of the parable, everything is fine. It is just what the hearers would expect to hear in such a situation. Later, however, it will change.

Did you ever wonder why Jesus chose to make this a vineyard? The starting of a vineyard took special care. The ground in a vineyard must be prepared carefully. The workers must plant the tender vines and give them careful attention. We will see, very shortly, why this was so very important.

...At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Luke 20:10.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

The servant referred to in this verse would be the one most trusted by his master. This was often one who received his freedom and chose to remain in the employment of his master as a "bondservant" for life. No other servant in the household was so much appreciated or valued as this servant.

The words "harvest time" do not appear in the Greek text. It reads "and in time." The word "time" was carefully chosen. There are two basic Greek words for time:

1. "kronos" - "κρόνος" identifies time on the clock.
2. "kairos" - "καιρός"- identifies a very special time - time when a baby is to be born; time when a decision was made, rather than time identified by the passing of so many minutes or hours. Etc.

In this instance the "kairos" time was when the fruit of the investment of the owner was about to be realized.

Now, Jesus introduces the scandal. This should not happen and everyone knew it. These people had all heard of a master beating his servants, but none of them would have heard of a servant doing the beating. Jesus told the story in this manner for a specific purpose which He has not yet disclosed. The word for "beat" is "dero" - "δέρω" from which we get our word dermatology. It means to skin, to flay, to beat to the point of destruction. Jesus uses an extreme example for purposes of effect. Everyone who heard the story would have been incensed that a servant did this and was not punished to the point of death.

Having gotten the attention of the crowd, Jesus continued with the story.

"He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed." Luke 20:11

The beating of one servant would have been enough to bring devastating judgment on the head of the servant who did the beating. Jesus adds a second beating experience to the story. In so doing, He has brought a second witness against these servants who have usurped the prerogatives of the master of the servants.

You will note that there is a progression in the story. The first servant was beaten and sent away. The second servant, however, was beaten, and treated shamefully. The word for "treated shamefully" was "atimazo" - "ἀτιμάζω". This word means to abuse, to treat with indignity, to dishonor. It was used to describe the way a military officer was treated when found guilty of failing to stand his ground in battle. The modern counterpart would be the tearing off his insignia, the signs of his rank and throwing them on the ground. This is what the irresponsible servants did to their former master's servant as a way of dishonoring their former master.

Jesus now adds insult to injury and describes the experience of the third servant.

"He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out." Luke 20:12.

Jesus did not explain why this third servant was not "beaten," but was wounded before being thrown out of the vineyard. The word for "wounded" is "trauma" "τραῦμα" which is a very severe beating, but not a death blow. This is a stronger word than the word for "beating" used with the first servant. The emphasis is clear. Though the property belonged to the master, the servants treated it as though it was theirs. They defended what

JESUS CHALLENGED BY RELIGIOUS LEADERS

belonged to them. Again, what these servants did to the servant was their way of sending a message to the real owner of the vineyard.

By this scandal, Jesus has drawn His hearers into the story. They had never heard of a slave doing such a thing and living to see the next day. Now Jesus turned His attention to the owner of the land.

"Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.'" Luke 20:13

Jesus has portrayed the owner as having done what he could to have mercy on those who were misusing him, but without success. The abused owner finally decided to send his son. Jesus described this as the man's "beloved" son. It was a way of describing the son who was to be the heir of the family. Notice the father's hope, "perhaps they will respect him." This is hope against hope.

A part of the scandal of this parable was the conduct of the owner. Certainly the slaves behaved scandalously, but the people would have been shocked to hear how the owner handled the situation. The owners they knew would have beaten the slaves and probably killed them all. This owner did not.

Jesus increased the shock for those who listened to His parable.

"But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. 'This is the heir' they said, 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others." Luke 20:14-16a

These were shocking words. It was shocking that the servants would throw the owner's son out of his vineyard and kill the heir; the only son of the landowner. It was devastating that the owner found it necessary to come and destroy the servants.

This is spoken of as a parable, but it is more like a carefully drawn allegory - the description of one thing in terms of another. In this allegory the vineyard is Israel. This was particularly appropriate. Just as an owner gave special care to the starting of a vineyard, so God had given very special care in providing the people of Israel with an appropriate land for their unending homeland.

The slaves who beat and killed the faithful servants were the religious leaders of Israel. This was a frightening charge. It was a crime and religious leaders thought of themselves as above any kind of breaking of the law. Nevertheless, this was Jesus' charge and it was defensible.

The faithful servants were the prophets whom God had sent to warn Israel about the error of their ways. They had done nothing worthy of death, but they were abused and put to death.

The landowner was God. He was pictured as having displayed unusual patience with the abusiveness of His servants. He is also pictured as having taken a firm stand when His son was killed and turned the vineyard over to other servants. This would be particularly shocking to Israel. They thought of themselves as a unique people of God holding a special relationship with God which was not possible for any other people.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

This was a dramatic response to the challenge of His authority in Luke 20:1-8. Jesus answered the challenge. He went on to describe what would happen to those who had destroyed the prophets. These people were now threatening His life.

We should note that in this allegory Jesus drew a clear distinction between himself and the prophets of old. Jesus used the faithful servants as a symbol for the prophets and the heir and only son as a symbol for Himself. He drew a strong distinction between Himself and the prophets. It was as great a distinction as that between a son in the family and the slaves within that same family.

The people who listened to the story Jesus taught responded to the story Jesus told.

When the people heard this, they said, "May this never be!" Luke 20:16b

Obviously the people understood exactly what Jesus was saying. One needs to ask the question, just what did these people mean? What were they talking about? Jesus was talking about Israel being replaced as the people of God and that service being given to another. It is only natural that these Jewish people would cry out in horror, "May it never be!"

There is an intensification of emotions as Luke records Jesus' response to the outburst of the people.

Jesus looked directly at them and asked. "Then what is the meaning of that which is written: 'the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone (cornerstone).'" Luke 20:17

This quotation, from Psalm 118:22, accomplished two things. First, it spoke to the issue which surfaced when the crowd responded, "May this never be!" Second, it focused attention directly on what the results would be as the religious leaders continued to seek ways to put Jesus to death.

The word "capstone" or "cornerstone" might better be translated "keystone." This is a wedge-shaped stone in the very center of most every arch in that part of the world. The use of this image was very intentional. If you remove the keystone, the entire arch will collapse. Jesus is just that central to the hope of every human being for redemption and forgiveness. Jesus is the keystone of all that God is doing to bring fallen humanity back to Himself.

Jesus used the image of the keystone, however, in a different light. Notice what He said:

"Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken in pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." Luke 20:18

There are those who will stumble over the reality of Jesus as the Son of God. They seem unable to believe that He is man and yet God. Jesus was saying that those for whom this is true will stumble over the need to believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. It will be their downfall unless they can believe. On the other hand, those against whom Jesus brings judgment will be totally devastated. They will be crushed beneath the weight of evidence that He is the Messiah and they decided to turn away from Him.

The religious leaders were many things, but they were not stupid. They understood what Jesus was saying and why He said it.

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The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people. Luke 20:19

Put yourself in the place of one of these religious leaders. You know that Jesus is talking about you and you know that all the people who are listening are also aware of that fact. These people, in the past, have taken your every word as absolute truth. Now they begin to wonder about your qualifications. They wonder about your integrity and your dependability. In the midst of it all, you hear Jesus insinuating some terrible things about your future. This would not be the most comfortable evening you ever spent. It is not surprising that these men were trying to find a way to trap Jesus and get rid of Him. It would be surprising if they did not.

Notice, also, the dilemma that these religious leaders were facing. They wanted very much to find a way to get rid of Jesus. Simultaneously, they were afraid of what the people would do if they found out about what these religious leaders were trying to do. Frustration is too mild a word for their situation. These leaders had lost this engagement, but it did not mean that they were finished with Jesus.

20:20-26 - Should We Pay Taxes to Caesar?

This portion of Scripture is recorded by all three synoptic writers - Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is interesting that this happens increasingly as we come into the last week of Jesus' life on earth.

Both Matthew (22:15-22) and Mark (12:13-17) indicate that the Herodians were a part of the conspiracy that was established against Jesus. This is interesting. The Herodians and the Pharisees were bitter enemies. The Herodians believed it was acceptable to obey a civil ruler though he was not a Jew. This position caused great bitterness for the Pharisees. They believed that this was shameful, something to be avoided at all cost. They saw submission to Rome as an insult to Jehovah. Interestingly enough, the bitter enemies could set aside their differences to deal with their common enemy - Jesus. The Herodians saw Jesus as a serious threat to the peace that they had worked so hard to establish with the Roman rulers. This cooperation indicates just how threatening Jesus was to the men of power in Israel.

The tension in the struggle between Jesus and the religious leaders of Israel was growing in intensity. It had come to the point where the leaders were becoming very angry about the whole thing. They had turned to some tactics which were unworthy of their consideration. Luke describes it in these terms.

Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be honest. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. Luke 20:20

The Jewish religious leaders turned to espionage tactics to trap Jesus. Someone from their group was watching Jesus always. An effort was made to conceal their identity. This was done in the hope that Jesus might not realize he was under surveillance. The idea was that these people were to pretend that they were sincere seekers after truth; honestly interested in what Jesus was doing, but in reality they were just looking for Him to make a mistake. These people were masters in the manipulation of words. If they could get Him to say certain things, this could be construed to mean several things other than what Jesus was

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talking about at the time. Ultimately, they were looking for some way to take Jesus before Roman authorities so that it would appear that Rome was doing this and not the religious leaders themselves. These spies were sent to question Him to get Him to say something that He did not mean.

*"Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God according to the truth."
Luke 20:21*

This was a lie! The things that these spies said were true, but they did not believe them at all. They did not believe that Jesus taught what was right. They did not believe that He refused to show partiality. These people did not believe that He taught the way of God. They did not believe that He taught according to the truth. All of this said by people who knew that anyone who was guilty of bearing false witness was condemned to be stoned to death. It apparently did not have much effect upon them.

Only after all this false flattery did the spies ask the question they had prepared to get Jesus into trouble with the Roman officials.

"Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" Luke 20:22

They did not ask if Rome had the right to levy the taxes, nor did they ask what an alternative might be. The question was simple, "Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar?"

This was a very delicate discussion. Both sides could easily find themselves in trouble with the Roman officials when all they were trying to do was make their point.

The subject of taxes was as disturbing then as it is now, perhaps more so. Add to this the religious problem Israel faced - they felt it was a sacrilege to pay tribute; it was an immoral act to support an idolatrous regime. Their fierce determination to serve no other god but Jehovah made them radical to the point of self-sacrifice. Jesus' enemies could not have chosen a more volatile subject in their search for something with which to accuse Jesus.

If you look over the sentences of this brief paragraph you will notice that it says quite a bit about the religious leaders who were trying to trap Jesus.

1. v. 20 - They were deceptive.
2. v. 20 - They lived a life of pretense - pretended to be honest.
3. v. 20 - They resorted to trickery - asked questions that did not represent desire for knowledge, but an opportunity to trap Jesus.
4. v. 20 They had evil desires - They hoped to catch Him in something that He said so that they could hand Him over to the authorities for prosecution and death.
5. . 20 - They plotted to destroy a good man.
6. v. 20 - They planned to turn Him over to Roman authorities - they worked in concert with Roman officials, a crime of which they accused the tax collectors.
7. v. 20 - They used civil authority for false, selfish reasons.
8. They used God to accomplish ungodly goals - This is blasphemy.

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9. v.21 - They were liars - "we know you speak and teach what is right." They did not believe that statement.
10. v. 21 - They used false flattery - their words could not be trusted.
11. v. 23 - They were guilty of duplicity - They did and said one thing, while actual motives were different.

This revelation would be very disturbing to the religious leaders. They wanted to be known as the ultra-religious people of the community. They showed, however, that this was an unwarranted understanding of their lifestyle.

Jesus understood just what they were thinking. Because of this, He could anticipate their strategy and the ways that they were trying to trap Him.

He saw through their duplicity and said to them, "Show me a denarius. Whose portrait and inscription are on it?" Luke 20:24

Both Matthew (22:18) and Mark (12:15) deal with the spies as hypocrites. This gives an impression of just how strained relationships had become. One gets the impression that emotions were strained almost to the breaking point.

There is a bit of humor in this statement. The Jewish religious leaders tried to take the law seriously. In the restatement of the Law, in Deuteronomy you will find these words:

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. Deuteronomy 5:8

At least in part, it was for this reason that they instituted temple currency so as not to have a graven image in the temple. Our strictest Jewish friends will not take money with them when they go to worship. This is because there is a human likeness on each denomination of our money. Apparently Jesus did not have such a coin, which incidentally had a likeness of Caesar, who was a god to the Romans. The religious leaders, however, had some and they gave it to Jesus according to His request. Interestingly enough, Jesus did not force this information upon them.

The statement, "He saw through their duplicity" is put differently in the Greek text. "It might be translated, "discerning of them the cunning (craftiness) . . ." Jesus knew, as the trap was being set, that they were being dishonest. He knew they were trying to trap him. This put the religious leaders at a distinct disadvantage. It exposed them to the probability that their motives would be made public.

These religious leaders thought that they had Jesus trapped no matter how He answered. If He said, "pay taxes," it would enrage the people who listened. If He said "refuse to pay taxes," they would turn Him in for sedition.

Notice that Jesus did not suggest to the religious leaders that He knew their motives, He just asked simple questions. As He did so often, Jesus allowed the religious leaders to implicate themselves by their own words.

The question Jesus asked was totally harmless - "Whose portrait and inscription are on it?" Jesus did not fall into the trap they had set. He rather pointed their attention to a third option. There are things in which we are responsible to God. There are other things in which we are responsible to civil authorities whom God has allowed to have control over us in this culture.

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The answer the religious leaders gave was very safe - "Caesar's." Jesus took this safe answer and helped them to realize that it was not as safe as they thought. Jesus gave them a principle with which to evaluate life.

He said to them, "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." Luke 20:25

Every person is under authority by divine choice. We are under the ultimate authority of God in all things. God has, however, placed us under the authority of civic leaders. Jesus taught this and Paul picked up on the idea and taught it in his epistles. Jesus was saying that we are all under authority. Recognize the area in which God has unique control over life and give Him that power over your life. God has given leaders power over areas of our lives. With the same kind of submission, give these people power over your life.

Luke points out the frustration in which the religious leaders found themselves.

They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent. Luke 20:26

This is a summary statement of the encounter over whether to pay taxes to Caesar. It was designed to trap Jesus and it failed. They designed it to embarrass Jesus, but it turned out to be no embarrassment to Jesus at all. The religious leaders, however, were embarrassed, placed in an unfavorable light and left without anything to say. This was unusual to say the least.

20:27-40 - The Sadducees Question Jesus About the Resurrection

This paragraph represents a possible scenario, but not a probable one. It is quite doubtful if anyone present knew of any experience such as this. This situation sounds very strange to us, but it was not so for them. That is because they had a Levirate law which dealt with this very situation.

The Levirate law had to do with childless couples. A man was disgraced if he died and did not have a son to carry on his heritage. This did happen sometimes. It looked as though that would happen with Abraham, but it did not. Zechariah and Elizabeth were another couple for whom this had been a distinct possibility. To make certain that the deceased man was not disgraced, they devised the Levirate law. If the man died childless, the dead man's closest brother was to take the brother's widow as his wife. The first child of that union carried the name of the deceased brother. In this way the name of the deceased was not obliterated from the annals of Israel. This law was not unique with Israel. It was common throughout the near east and can be found even up into the Caucasus mountains. If the older brother refused to take his brother's wife, she would humiliate him before the city fathers. Then the next brother was to take her as his wife. The issue raised by these Sadducees was not a new issue. It had been long debated and the Rabbis concluded that in the resurrection, the wife returned to her original husband. It is against this background that the Sadducees asked this tricky question of Jesus.

The motives of the Sadducees were exposed in the fact that they were asking Jesus for clarifying detail concerning the resurrection in which they did not believe. This was clearly a means to set a trap for Jesus. They were willing to make any possible deception so as to accomplish that goal.

This fact was not wasted on Luke

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Some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. Luke 20:27

This was Luke's way of saying that these people, who did not believe in the resurrection, were going to ask a question about the resurrection in which they did not believe.

Their question was one that every serious Jew had heard discussed often.

"Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother." Luke 20:27, 28

This is a statement of the Levirate law, which is still practiced in parts of Africa and throughout the middle east. Understand that these Sadducees were simply asking Jesus where He stood on this issue that divided the scholars of His day. The falsehood of the encounter was that the Sadducees did not believe that there was such a thing as a resurrection.

The Sadducees continued with their inquiry:

"Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. The second and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. Finally, the woman died too. Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?" Luke 20:29-33

All of the religious factions believed in death, but not all of them believed in the resurrection from the dead. People who did not believe in the resurrection posed this question for Jesus. In one sense it is an important question, but it is trivial in nature, in view of the major questions which demand our attention.

Though the question may have been trivial and the motive deceptive, Jesus took the question at face value and dealt with it carefully.

Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection. But in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord, 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive." Luke 20:34-38

There is a strong contrast between the people of "this age" and the people of "that age." "This age" refers to those who are motivated by non-Christian values. "That age," on the other hand, refers to those who are the recipients of eternal life. The people of this world focus their attention on the things that are central to life now. We must not misconstrue Jesus' intention. He was not saying that marriage was unimportant or a base concern. He simply used it as a symbol of those concerns which are limited to this world in their scope.

Jesus continued, in verse 35, with the word "but." This suggests that there will be a strong contrast between the material which follows and that which was just presented. Jesus was saying that those for whom eternal life will be a reality are not focusing on

marriage, on the things of the here and now. He based this on the fact that death will no longer be a part of their anticipation. They will live eternally as the angels do. Jesus pronounces them to be God's children since they have been resurrected and have received eternal life.

Jesus made a very strong charge against these teachers of the law. He taught the group that the people who are worthy of eternal life "neither marry nor are given in marriage." These men had just asked Jesus about whose wife the woman would be in the age to come. In other words, Jesus was accusing them of not knowing what the scripture teaches. That was a grave charge for men who were more knowledgeable of the Scriptures than anyone else in the land. That was a serious charge, but Jesus was correct in His accusation.

In verse 37, Jesus uses the story of the burning bush, in Exodus 3:6, to show a point. In the Exodus passage, God said to Moses:

Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob . . . " Exodus 3:6a

Jesus pointed out that God did not say, "I **was** the God of Abraham . . ." but "I **am** the God of Abraham..." The use of the present tense suggests that this is a current relationship, not just the report of an historical one. Jesus deals with these great figures of Jewish history as having been raised from the dead. This does not mean that they have already been raised from the dead. It does mean that their resurrection is so certain that though it is a future event, it is dealt with as an accomplished fact. Jesus uses this information to make an assertion about God. The resurrection of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is irrevocably certain. It is a basis for saying that God is the God of the living, not the God of the dead. Notice how Jesus ends the sentence.

For to him all are alive." Luke 20:38b

Jesus was not saying that all these men were alive at that moment. They were not. He was saying that God deals with them as alive now because their resurrection is so certain.

This had to put the religious leaders on the spot. They would have to support the statements about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob because they were so highly respected among their people. On the other hand, to affirm these statements about the great men of their faith, would also affirm the thing that Jesus was saying about the resurrection. They could not possibly affirm this. They had placed themselves on the spot. Jesus, and the whole crowd understood that this was true. Again, Jesus made no accusations. In their attempts to trap Jesus, however, the religious leaders put themselves in a difficult position.

In 20:39, Luke observes the natural result of the Pharisees predicament.

Some teachers of the law responded, "Well said, teacher!" Luke 20:39.

In spite of the efforts to put Jesus on the spot, some Teachers of the Law had to admit that Jesus had told the truth. They were admitting their failure in the attempt to trap Jesus in His teachings. They were also admitting that Jesus was telling the truth. This was something that they had been contesting. They had used this fraud as a tool to destroy Him. This meant that the things that the religious leaders were teaching were falsehood worthy of death in their system.

The closing remark of the paragraph is a devastating summary of the events of the paragraph.

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And no one dared to ask him any more questions." Luke 20:40

Having been discredited by the answers that Jesus gave, the questioners placed themselves in jeopardy with the people if they had asked any more questions. Jesus' response had removed their cover of seeking truth and exposed them as peddlers of error. This could place them in jeopardy of physical harm. The common people believed that Jesus was telling the truth and that the religious leaders were looking for something with which to destroy Him. That, of course, is just what it was. The silence of the accusers, on that occasion, was deafening.

20:41-44 - Jesus Challenged the Sadducees About "David's Son"

It may seem that Jesus was simply toying with the religious leaders at this point. He was not. Jesus took a common understanding and asked some simple questions about what it implies. In so doing, Jesus confronted the religious leaders with some embarrassing questions which they had to answer before the people could continue to trust them. It clearly put the religious leaders on the spot.

Notice that the approach of Jesus has changed since the Triumphal Entry. Up until that time, Jesus had dealt with the questions raised by His enemies, but did not confront them. At this point the tactic changed. Since the entry into Jerusalem, Jesus went on the offensive; He aggressively challenged the positions of the religious leaders rather than waiting for them to challenge Him.

Psalm 110:1 was a passage the religious leaders loved to quote. Notice that Jesus was not replying to any question or challenge that was brought against Him. He was on the attack and everyone knew it. Notice the way Luke records the encounter.

Then Jesus said to them, "How is it that they say the Christ is the Son of David? David himself declares in the Book of Psalms: 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' David calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"
Luke 20:41-44

We should remind ourselves that the word "Christ" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "Meshiah" and the English word "Messiah." It was true, the religious leaders and scholars did refer to their Messiah as "David's Son."

The word "they," in verse 41, is a reference to the religious leaders and great rabbinic teachers. These people believed what was written in verses 41-43. Consequently, they were trapped by the obvious questions which follow in verse 44. The question is one of simple logic. It is posed in the logical "if . . . then . . ." format. If David calls the Messiah Lord, then how could Jesus be the son of the one who calls Him Lord. In terms of logic, David had created an impossible situation. The answer to Jesus' question was that though the Messiah came from David's lineage; long after the time of David: still, the Messiah was far greater than David. The Messiah was greater not in terms of His point in history, but because of His greatness. He surpassed the greatness of David, Israel's most celebrated king. The point is made even stronger in the Hebrew text of Psalm 110. There David said,

"Jehovah said to my adonai . . ." Psalm 110:1

Jesus, in making this quotation, was obviously speaking of Himself and everyone present knew it. The name Jehovah, the unspoken name for God, which was too holy for a man to speak. This was true except once each year on the Day of Atonement, and then in the temple. The High Priest spoke of God's great justice and faithfulness in covenant. It is the name for God that was used in the story of the fall of Adam and Eve and their dismissal from the garden. The name "Adonai," on the other hand, is the name Israel spoke when they came to the name "Jehovah" in their readings. In this careful statement, Jesus gave an excellent picture of what Messiah was like. The most common name for the Messiah among the Jewish people was "Son of David." The significance of this is that He would be a king of Israel. This is, of course, what the people at the triumphal entry anticipated as they brought Jesus into the city. It was an image of military might and royal authority. Messiah was that, but He was more. . Using the name "Adonai" or "master" Jesus was saying that the "Messiah," "the Anointed One" would be God; would be a master over kings, but not limited to the human weaknesses of a king, as powerful as any king might be. "Adonai" was a term of majesty and great dignity. Jesus was accusing them of having a view of Messiah that was too meager; too limited. They wanted military and political prowess; Jesus was describing a Messiah who was Lord of the universe. The name "Lord," which is a derivative of "Adonai," was the most common title by which people referred to Jesus during his ministry. Any thoughtful Jewish person would have been aware of that fact. I suspect that this was a major frustration for the Pharisees and other religious leaders all during the ministry of Jesus.

Jesus was dealing not with logic, but with the person of their Messiah - who is He? In this quotation from Psalm 110, Jesus was saying that the Messiah, namely Himself, was eternal. Though Jesus was present in the first century, He was also eternal. The religious and scholarly leaders of Israel thought of David as the greatest king of Israel. Jesus was clearly greater than David. David, though he was the greatest of Israel's kings, thought of himself as the servant of the Messiah. Jesus was claiming the position of Messiah, without running the risk of saying the words. Had he said the words, the religious leaders could have turned Him over to the Roman authorities for sedition. Nothing that Jesus said, in this short paragraph could be considered libelous. If Jesus was greater than David, whom they revered greatly, then Jesus had a right to lay claim to their honor and reverence even more than David did. This put the religious leaders in a bind. They were trying to discredit Jesus. His questions, however, placed Him in a situation of honor and respect like nothing they had confronted in the past. All this, of course, was said out in the open in front a great crowd of people who believed that Jesus was their messiah.

Note that there was no answer to Jesus challenge. This would have been most unfortunate for the Sadducees. They were the greatest experts in the Law. To be challenged in this way and say nothing was to admit that the challenger was a greater expert than they were. This would be doubly difficult. Everyone knew that Jesus was not trained in the Law as they were. The greatest problem with their silence was that it robbed them of their supremacy of knowledge concerning the law.

20:45-47 - Jesus Warns People About the Scribes

This paragraph is made up of three short verses, but it is packed with emotion. Jesus has been talking to the religious leaders, but now He has taken his position to the people. Jesus not only challenges the religious leaders in a way He had not previously done, but he

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also made a frontal attack on these religious leaders personally. This was appropriate because the Teachers of the Law were more forward about their greed for money and position than any of the other Pharisees.

Luke begins the paragraph by describing the circumstances in which this experience took place.

While all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, "Beware of the teachers of the law. They liked to walk around in flowing robes. They loved to be greeted in the marketplaces. They craved the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. Luke 20:45, 46

This is the first of two different charges Jesus made against the Teachers of the Law. Jesus gave four illustrations of His charge against the teachers of the law:

1. **They love to walk around in flowing robes.** The disciples understood just what Jesus was saying about these men. He was accusing them of pride, but it was more than that. The robes of which Jesus spoke were very long and they had ultra-full sleeves. It would be impossible for a person to run in these long robes. The very full sleeves would make it impossible for the person to do any work at all. These were the robes worn by the wealthiest and most influential men in the community. They were the robes which were worn by the father of a wealthy family or the one who was to be his heir. This was the case of Joseph's coat of many colors. His coat caused trouble, not because it was expensive, but because it made it impossible for him to work and he was younger than the other brothers. They felt he should have been doing more work than they did. Again, the fact that the heir was to wear that kind of coat meant that the oldest son would not be the heir. The youngest son, the son of the other wife at that, made all the other brothers even more angry. Jesus was accusing these men of pride, but also of arrogance of position - they wanted to be known as too good to work; too important to do physical labor.

God intended that they have sufficient to live well, but not to be known for their wealth or important position. Their pride should have been in the law, and not in their possessions or position.

2. **They love to be greeted in the marketplaces.** The Teachers of the Law did not need to go to the marketplace to buy food, which was the most common commodity sold there. The purchase of food was one of the things that the women did, and did very well. At least twice each week, when the market was open, the Teachers of the Law would be present, not to buy food, but to put in an appearance. It was a political opportunity. People tended to give special greetings to people of great wealth or power. The Teachers of the Law wanted to be one of those. It is much like the political figures of today standing at the gate of a factory or going through a shopping center to meet the people. It is a way of becoming better known and applauded by the people. This was the motive of the Teachers of the Law. God did not have this in mind for people chosen for their special task as the Teachers of the Law were. This is another side of the pride and arrogance of which Jesus repeatedly chided this whole group of religious leaders.

3. **They love to have the most important seats in the synagogues.** There were strict rules about whom could sit where in the synagogue. The Teachers of the Law felt that they, because of their great expertise in the Law, should have the most important seats in the synagogue.
4. **They love to have the places of honor at banquets.** The places of honor at any dinner was reserved for very special people. There were probably other, different things Jesus could have chosen about the Teachers of the Law that were unfortunate. It appears that Jesus chose this one because it highlights the fact that they were preoccupied with the acclaim of men. They were supposed to give their lives, however, to the study of the Scriptures. They focused their attention on their pride.

Jesus, continued the attack, but turned abruptly in a different direction. Notice that the previous four accusations all had to do with their pride. Suddenly Jesus was looking with care at their business practices.

"They devour widow's houses . . . " Luke 20:47a

Certainly Jesus was not speaking literally. This was a figurative statement, but a very serious one. Almost, if not everyone, who listened to Jesus knew this part of the law. The people of Israel were commanded to protect the widow. The Teachers of the Law, of all people, were expected to know and obey this law without any question. Far from protecting the widow, they were "devouring their houses."

How does one devour a house? The law made it clear that no matter what happened, it was not lawful for anyone to ever take the home away from the widow and the fatherless. Teachers of the Law could quote this instruction by heart. They were called upon, in the courts, to recite this law quite often.

A widow usually would have no visible means of support. The Teachers of the Law did not just take the house away from the widows. When the husband died, the widow was often destitute. The Teachers of the Law would lend them money to meet their expenses knowing that the widow had no way to repay. When the debt came due, the Teacher of the Law would, from all appearances, foreclose on the widow with great sorrow. No matter how sad he was, he still ended up with the property. This was an absolute, unequivocal violation of the law. Jesus was confronting them with their own illegal actions. This was another way of saying that they knew the law inside out, but that did not mean that they obeyed the law.

As if this was not enough, Jesus had another charge.

"... and for a show make lengthy prayers." Luke 20:47b

The length of a prayer was absolutely unimportant to Jesus. Why, then, did He make an issue of the length of the prayers of the Teachers of the Law? Jesus was not dealing with the length of the prayer, but the motive. These men were praying long prayers in the hope of influencing people to believe that they were super holy. As Jesus said, this was for a show. Their pride was rising to the surface again and Jesus was confronting them about it.

Jesus closed the paragraph and the chapter with an announcement. This accomplished two things: First, it portrayed Jesus in the role of a prophet as these people needed to see Him. Second, Jesus was announcing that arrogance, pride and all forms of subterfuge would be dealt with by God no matter who the guilty party was. This was welcomed information by the common people. They were well aware of the pride of their religious

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leaders. They would be pleased to hear a prophetic word concerning the punishment of such evils.

"Such men will be punished most severely. " Luke 20:47c

The people who listened to Jesus had probably never heard anyone accuse the Teachers of the Law and the Sadducees of a sin of any kind. Jesus attacked them on a number of accounts. This would have pleased the listeners a great deal. It hardly seems that the Sadducees would have been quite as exuberant as the other part of the crowd. Nevertheless, it was the truth and everyone knew it.

Conclusion

This picture of Jesus is quite different from what we saw in the rest of the Gospel of Luke. He is aggressive and confrontive to say the least. Think about the kinds of things Jesus attacked. What would be the parallel to these things in our society today? If Jesus were present and attacked these same problems in our society, what would He say? How would He be received? If He said these things to us, how would we feel? From the earliest records of God's dealings with people, He always demanded that people live the life they talked about. It is one thing to know all the right answers and the proper theological presentations. It is all as nothing if there is no appropriate response of action to our knowledge of the Gospel.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 23

LUKE 21:1-38

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE AND JERUSALEM

1. In our best Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of Luke there are eight paragraphs. On the table below, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

21:1-4	
21:5, 6	
21:7-19	
21:20-24	
21:25-28	
21:29-33	
21:34-36	
21:37, 38	

2. In 21:1-4, Jesus talked about the widow's offering.
- How did Jesus describe this woman?
 - What difference does this make?
 - Compare what Jesus said about the rich men and the widow. What did you learn?
 - How would you tell this story to children using modern situations?
3. In Luke 21:5, 6, Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple.
- How did this teaching opportunity come about? How does that affect what Jesus said?
 - What did the disciples see when they looked at the newly completed temple?
 - What did Jesus see when He looked at the temple?
 - Put yourself in the place of the disciples as Jesus talked about the temple. How would you feel?
 - If you were Jewish and heard Jesus prophesy the destruction of the temple, what effect would it have on your understanding of what it meant to be Jewish?
4. In 21:7-19, Jesus talked about the approach of the end times.
- What opened the door for Jesus to teach about the end times?
 - The disciples asked Jesus two questions.
 - What were the two questions?
 - What was the concern of the disciples?
 - How did Jesus answer their questions?
 - What two warnings did Jesus give the disciples?

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- e. In 21:9, Jesus gave instructions to the disciples. If He said those words to you, how would you feel?
- f. In 21:10, Jesus spoke about nations and kingdoms. In what way are they different?
- g. What signs did Jesus give in answer to the disciple's questions?
- h. In 21:12, Jesus described what will happen to believers. What did He say?
- i. About what did Jesus tell His disciples not to worry?
- j. If Jesus said this to you, how would you feel?
- k. After these instructions about worry, Jesus gave them two promises.
 - (1). What were they?
 - (2). What difference would they make?
- l. Read 21:16-19 as though Jesus were talking to you.
 - (1). How would you feel?
 - (2). There **appears** to be a contradiction in Jesus' words.
 - (a). What was it?
 - (b). How would you deal with it?
 - (3). In what way can standing firm save these disciples?
- 5. In 21:20-24, Jesus described the painful destruction of Jerusalem.
 - a. Think of yourself as a Jewish person who lived in Jerusalem. How would you feel?
 - b. In Luke 21:20, 21, Jesus gave instructions for the disciples when Jerusalem was attacked.
 - (1). What were these instructions?
 - (2). Why would Jesus give these instructions?
 - c. In Luke 21:22, Jesus spoke of this devastation as punishment. For what is Jerusalem being punished?
 - d. In Luke 21:23, 24, Jesus said this devastation would be particularly tragic for pregnant women and nursing mothers. Why would Jesus single out these groups? In this passage, Jesus emphasized that Jerusalem would be trampled by the Gentiles "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." What does this mean?
- 6. In Luke 21:25-28, Jesus spoke of the coming of the Son of Man.
 - a. In 21:25, Jesus spoke of natural disasters affecting the sun, moon and stars. Why would He focus on these three? What does this say about the power of God?
 - b. In 21:25, Jesus also spoke of nations that are distressed by the "roaring and tossing of the sea." What kinds of events could this include?
 - c. In 21:26, Jesus prophesied that people would be devastated by terror when "the heavenly bodies will be shaken." What does He mean by this? What would it be like if it happened to us now?
 - d. In 21:27, Jesus said the Son of Man would "come in a cloud."

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 23

- (1). What is the relationship between the coming of the Son of Man and the tragedies which preceded His coming?
- (2). What is the significance of the coming of the 'Son of Man' in a cloud?
- (3). In 21:27, Jesus gave them two instructions.
 - (a). What were the instructions?
 - (b). What is the significance of these instructions?
7. In Luke 21:29-33, Jesus taught His disciples about the fig tree.
 - a. Notice that Jesus spoke of "the fig tree **and all the trees.**" What is added to His teaching by the addition of the words "and all the trees?"
 - b. Jesus began Luke 21:31 with the words, "even so." These words usually indicate that a comparison is coming. In what way does the statement about the fig tree in 21:29, 30, compare with the statement about tragedy as referred to in 21:31?
 - c. In Luke 21:32, Jesus spoke of "This generation." What are some possibilities of what Jesus was referring to by the words "this generation?"
 - d. Read Luke 21:33 carefully. What does this verse add to the story of the fig tree, in 21:29-32?
8. In 21:34-36, Jesus admonishes His disciples concerning the events He had described.
 - a. List His admonitions.
 - b. What reasons did Jesus give for offering these admonitions?
 - c. How could we be trapped by the things Jesus mentioned?
 - d. In these three verses, what was Jesus' primary instruction?
 - e. Jesus instructed them to pray for two things.
 - (1). What are these things?
 - (2). Describe what Jesus meant by each one.
9. In Luke 21:37, 38, Luke describes two things Jesus did.
 - a. What were the two things?
 - b. Why would Luke tell us Jesus spent the nights on the Mount of Olives?
 - c. What additional understanding do you gain from His words, "All the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple?"
10. Reflect on what you have learned from Luke 21. In what way will it change your life each day?

LESSON 23: – LUKE 21:1-38

JESUS TAUGHT THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE AND JERUSALEM

Introduction

The content of Luke 21:1-4 is in Mark 12:41-44, but not in the Gospel of Matthew. All the rest of the chapter is in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

This has been true from the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. Each Gospel record is unique in its general emphasis, but all of them have a common strain in the week preceding the crucifixion.

In our best Greek manuscripts there are eight paragraphs in Luke chapter 21. They are as follows:

21:1-4	The Widow's Offering
21:5, 6	The Destruction of the Temple
21:7-19	The Coming of The End Times
21:20-24	The Coming Destruction of Jerusalem
21:25-28	The Coming of the Son of Man
21:29-33	The Parable of the Fig Tree
21:34-36	Jesus Urges the Disciples to Watchfulness
21:37, 38	Jesus Taught in Jerusalem

21:1-4 - The Widow's Offering

As in chapter 20, Jesus is still in the temple. In our minds we tend to think of the temple much like a church or a modern Jewish synagogue. This is inaccurate. The temple in use, at the time of Jesus, was begun by Herod in 20 B.C.. He completed the sanctuary by the middle of 18 B.C. The outer courts, however, were not completed until 64 A.D. Jesus never saw the completed temple. He did view the progress that was taking place all the time during His ministry. The temple was on the highest point in the city. The sanctuary rose 150 feet above the pavement. In the temple there was a series of exclusions. Anyone, Jew or Gentile, could be outside the temple, in the Gentile court. Only Jewish people could pass beyond the Soreg - a low fence separating the court of the Gentiles from the enclosure into which only Jews could pass. There were 13 gateways in the Soreg. Any Jewish person could pass through Soreg into the sacred enclosure. A Gentile, however, could not enter there, on pain of death. All Jewish people could pass through the beautiful gate and up the eleven foot stairs to the court of the women. Jewish men could be here as well. We know that there were many theological discussions in the court of the women. Only the Jewish men could pass through the Nicanor gate into the colonnaded Israel Court. Here only Jewish men and boys came for worship. Inside the Israel Court was the Priest's Court where the sacrifices were made. Only priests served in this area. Only priests went into the sanctuary itself. There were two parts to the sanctuary. - the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The holy place housed the seven branched candlestick, the tables of shew-bread and the altar of incense. Beyond the Holy Place, and through two massive hanging

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curtains was the Holy of Holies. Here only the High Priest could go, and that only on the Day of Atonement. Inside was the ark of the covenant with the cherubim above.

In the Court of the Women, there were thirteen "trumpets," treasure chests with bell shaped tops like trumpets. At the bottom of this trumpet was a chest into which the money fell. People would drop their offerings into these trumpets. Jesus was sitting in this area. Luke describes it this way:

*As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.
Luke 21:1, 2*

This was a common scene. The distinction between the rich and the poor was pronounced. The rich were very rich and the poor were very poor. Part of being a rich Jewish person was to give large sums to the temple, but it always received proper attention. There were times when very rich people had servants go ahead of them proclaiming that their master was going to make a large contribution when he reached the temple. In the temple then, and in the church now, the large gifts of the wealthy impressed people. Luke has posed a strong contrast between the very rich men and their large gifts, and the very poor widow and her two copper coins. Notice that Luke makes no effort to establish the enormous size of the gifts of the rich. That was not important here. He was very careful, however, to identify specifically what the poor widow gave. That was important.

It is reasonable to assume that the large gifts of the rich did not represent any privation or hardship at all. That was not true for the poor widow. This represented a very serious hardship for her. Two criteria decide the size of a gift to God.

1. Why was the gift given? The rich men usually gave because they wanted everyone to know how great their offerings to the temple were. It did not always express their gratitude to God. The poor widow gave very little, but out of gratitude.
2. How sacrificial was the gift? If a large gift represented no sacrifice at all, then there is no gift. On the other hand, no matter how small the gift, when it represents great sacrifice, it is a great gift.

Jesus used this opportunity to teach those who were near Him, probably His disciples, the real meaning of a gift. Mark tells this story in Mark 12:41-44 and he suggests that Jesus spoke to the disciples.

"I tell you the truth," He said, "This poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." Luke 21:3, 4

The use of the words, "I tell you the truth," was a way of placing emphasis on His words. It was very common for Rabbis to speak in this way.

Jesus spoke of the woman as "a poor widow." In almost every instance, a widow was necessarily poor. She did not have Social Security to sustain her in old age. When her husband died, she lost her means of support. She could live with one of her children, but she would have essentially nothing. When speaking of widows, who were desperately poor to begin with, and then call the woman a poor widow; this is as strong a statement of poverty as Jesus could make. The copper coins the woman placed in the treasury were called "lipta" or a mite. They were the smallest coins available in Israel. It took many,

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many of these to make up a days wage. Her gift in our coinage, would be a penny. The gifts of the rich would be thousands of dollars.

Jesus shocked His hearers by saying that the widow's mites were a greater gift than all the rich men's large contributions put together.

Notice that Jesus then explained what he meant by that statement. This would be necessary because everyone knew how much the rich men had given. They also knew how little the poor widow gave. The rich men gave out of their great wealth. It represented no sacrifice at all. They would not do without food or necessity because they gave these gifts. Jesus described the "poor widow's" situation, on the other hand, in two ways:

1. She gave out of her poverty. The word translated "poverty" is "husterema" - "ὕστερημα" literally means that which is lacking. She gave out of that which she already did not have. In other words, she did not have enough to live on when she came to the temple, but she gave anyway.
2. She "put in all that she had." Simply put, when the poor widow made her offering, she had nothing left for her daily living. It would require that she go without the necessities of life. This is real sacrifice.

It is not surprising that Jesus said she gave more than the others all put together. Her sacrifice was total. Their gift was no sacrifice at all. She could have no motive for giving except to respond to the goodness of God, while the rich could impress many people with their gifts. We may never think of it in these terms, but from God's perspective, the size of the gift is no criteria of its value.

This was so typical of Jesus. He was very sensitive to the feelings and needs of the poor. He had discovered a way to show their worth; the way they could compete in a world of the rich.

21:5, 6 - The Destruction of the Temple

This paragraph represents Jesus' final **public** teaching experience. He will teach again, but not in this manner. That places a particular significance upon the things He taught.

As we begin this prophetic paragraph, there are some ideas we should share about Hebrew understandings and about prophecy itself.

Jesus took this teaching opportunity from a startling remark made by another person. Matthew 24:1, 2 tells us that these other people were the disciples. I believe that is true. We must remember that they completed the temple only eight years before. The disciples had not seen the completed temple often. It would still be an astonishing attraction to these people from up north where the tallest building might be one or two stories tall. The temple was a marvel of architecture and construction for them.

In a very quiet way, Luke draws a strong contrast between what Jesus saw and what the disciples saw. The disciples saw majesty and splendor. Jesus, on the other hand, saw trauma and tragedy. He said,

"As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; everyone of them will be thrown down." Luke 21:6

This is a shocking form of desecration and devastation. It is one thing to destroy a building. It is quite another to demolish it so badly that there is literally not one stone left upon another.

We tend to think of this in matter of fact terms. They did not. This was the temple of God and they thought of the temple in much the same way that they thought of God. These were the people God has chosen as "His people." This just could not happen to them. We can't understand the shock Jesus' statements produced. His statements proved to be true.

21:7- 19 - The Coming of the End Times

As we begin our study of this prophetic paragraph, there are some understandings we should share. Some prophetic statements have a double focus. They deal with imminent events, but also point to coming events that are far in the future. Most scholars believe that this discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem is one such prophecy. Jesus spoke of the coming fall of the city, which took place in 70 A.D. He was also speaking of the coming of the end times. A second understanding has to do with the teachings of Jewish Rabbis. In their understanding there were three eras through which Israel would pass:

1. **This present time/age** Romans 8:18 might be an example of this. This would describe the difficulties through which they are going now; difficult, almost unbearable.
2. **The day of the Lord** - this will be a time of national and natural disaster. This is what Peter described in II Peter 3:10. It is far more terrible than the previous category.
3. **The coming age** - All Jewish teachings and hopes focused on the coming age when they would rule and there would be eternal peace.

Jesus is talking about the second of these three eras.

In the previous paragraph of the text, Jesus used the disciple's curiosity over the massive temple to teach them about future events. This paragraph, however, is an outgrowth of that conversation. The disciples asked about what He had said.

"Teacher," they asked, "When will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?" Luke 21:7

The disciples had two questions:

1. When will this happen?
2. How will we know that it is about to take place?

They obviously did not want to be surprised. They were eager to prepare themselves against this coming tragedy. Notice that they did not argue with Jesus about whether these things would happen. Their real concern was apparently readiness. This is often a sign of great fear or insecurity. No one would fault them if that were true, because of the vulnerability of the people of Israel and Jerusalem.

Notice that Jesus did not immediately answer the question exactly as they asked it. He was, however, speaking to the issues they raised.

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He replied, "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he, ' and 'The time is near.' Do not follow them." Luke 21:8

Jesus did not tell them when Jerusalem would be destroyed. He gave them a warning and some advice which dealt with the issue they had raised.

He warned them that they faced the real danger of being deceived by impostors. The word translated "impostor" "planao" "πλανάω" means to seduce into wrong directions. They understood this because false teachers worked that way. These people had two basic messages:

1. I am the Christ.
2. The time of the coming is near.

The warning was that these deceptions seemed so real that even the disciples could be fooled by this fraud. That would not be difficult to understand.

Jesus' second instruction had to do with the same situation. He instructed His disciples not to follow these men. It did not matter how innocent they might seem to be, they should avoid these men. There was no middle ground for them.

In the following verse Jesus was speaking more directly to the question of the disciples.

"When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away." Luke 21:9

They asked Jesus about the signs to anticipate. Having mentioned the possibility of deception, Jesus turned to a different direction. He said that war and revolution should not frighten them. The word "frighten" "ptoeo" or "πτοέω." It means to be worried to the point of confusion, to be frightened so that you cannot act.

Jesus said they would see "wars and revolutions." The word which was translated "revolutions" is "akatastasia" or "ἀκαταστασία" which really means instability, tumult, sedition, the opposite of settled and tranquil. Jesus said they should not be frightened at this because these conditions were necessary, but did not signal the end. There is a tendency to link these conditions with the end. That was not what Jesus taught. He taught that these things must happen but that the end would not come immediately.

In verses ten and eleven, Jesus described conditions that these disciples could observe.

Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes, famines, and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven . . . "
Luke 21:10, 11

As you look at these two verses, questions come to mind. If Jesus had said, "nation will rise against nation," but omitted "kingdom against kingdom," what would the difference be? The answer is quite a bit. The word translated "nation" is "ethnos" "ἔθνος" from which we get our English word "ethnic." It describes a group of people bound together by physical, family, tribal ties. The United States is an example of this. There are hundreds of ethnic groups in the country.

On the other hand, the word translated "kingdom" is "basileia" - "βασιλεία" which refers to sovereignty, royal power and dominion. "Ethnos" represents the groups while

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"Nsodoros" "νοδóρος" represents the authority to govern the groups or tribes. It is possible to have many families or tribes," ethnos" one country, "basileia." several struggling areas of the world today have such a composition - Iraq, Yugoslavia, Etc. Jesus was saying that such conflicts will surface, but they do not signal the end.

In verse eleven, Jesus changed the direction of His illustrations. He turned from international conflict and tragedy to natural disaster. It does not appear that this is an exhaustive list, but rather an indication of the kinds of things that will happen. Jesus listed the following:

1. Great earthquakes - Matthew attaches the words "in various places" at this point, rather than where it is in our text.)
2. Famines
3. Pestilences in various places
4. Fearful events
5. Great signs from heaven

This list causes great fear in our minds, but all of them have happened in the past and will probably happen again. These are, to some extent, bearable, but if all were to come simultaneously, it would be a tragedy of the greatest order.

Jesus turns His focus again in verse twelve.

"But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name." Luke 21:12

The shift in direction is from national and natural disaster, to the personal experience of the saints. In these prophetic words, Jesus gave them at least some answer to their important question. They asked, "what are the signs," and Jesus identified three:

1. International conflict
2. Natural disaster
3. persecution of Christians.

It is interesting to me that of the three, we tend to spend more time looking for the national conflicts and natural disasters, than we do for persecution.

Having captured their attention with the mention of persecution, Jesus proceeded to describe something of what that would be like. He mentions several details:

1. They will deliver you to synagogues.
2. They will deliver you to prisons.
3. You will be brought before kings
4. You will be brought before governors.
5. The charges will stem from their relationship with Jesus Christ.

One might wonder why bring the Christians to the synagogue. The synagogue was the center for worship, but it was also the symbol of religious power and authority. During

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the time of Jesus, the most powerful Jewish person was not a politician, but the High Priest. Within one week of the time Jesus said these words, He himself was brought before the leaders of the synagogue. The High Priest and the Sanhedrin decided to destroy both His ministry and His person. Jesus was saying that this would happen to His followers as well. Frankly, it has been happening, at intervals, ever since.

One might wonder why anyone would be imprisoned for believing in Jesus. History, however, is riddled with examples of people who went to prison rather than deny their faith in Christ. This gives some evidence of just how much a threat the saints were to order and stability in that culture.

The apostle Paul was brought before both kings and governors for his faithful witness to Jesus Christ. He was not unique in this regard. The other apostles faced the same attack, as have faithful men in every era of the life of the church.

Motive is as important as the severity of the attack. Jesus made it clear that these traumatic experiences would come because of their relationship with Christ. There have been those who have made inappropriate decisions or behaved unfortunately. They have suffered for their errors, but it was not because they had faith in Christ. Jesus is talking about persecution, not just rewards for unfortunate conduct.

Jesus continued by describing the results of these tragedies.

"This will result in your being a witness to them. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict." Luke 21:13-15

The most important part of this revelation was not the depth of their persecution, but the result of the pending suffering. The endurance of suffering would enable them to become a witness for Christ among the religious and political powers who **seemed** to have power over them.

It seems, at first, that Jesus' instruction about worry borders on the unreasonable. How can one face an experience that might cost him his life and not be worried? The Greek text, of verse 14, can be helpful here. Roughly translated, it reads,

"Do not make into the hearts of you to practice to make a defense."
Luke 21:14

Jesus' command does not deal so much with worry as it does practicing a defense. It is one thing to instruct His disciples not to waste their time practicing their defense. It is quite another thing to tell them not to worry.

As happened so often, Jesus' promise followed /is promise. Jesus promised the disciples two things that were essential:

1. He promised them words that could not be refuted by their enemies.
2. He promised them wisdom with which their enemies could not manage.

The catch was that these disciples would have to be able to trust the words and wisdom that Jesus would give to save their lives. Otherwise, survival would force them to plan their defense. The issue, with which Jesus was dealing, was whether they had faith that He would indeed give them a defense.

The prophecy to this point had been bleak, but there was more.

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"You will be betrayed by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish. By standing firm you will save yourselves." Luke 21:16-19

Unfortunately, this seems traumatic to us. Many of us are sensitive to any opposition to our faith. Jesus made it clear that His disciples should expect such conflict. It is almost beyond comprehension that a person could betray their own family and friends. Betrayal is betrayal no matter whence it comes. The possibility that a mother or father could do such a thing to their own flesh and blood is most repulsive to us. We know, however, that this very thing has happened repeatedly across the years. It tells us something about just how far this opposition to the Gospel is willing to go to crush the Good News.

Although it is not necessarily true, we tend to think that death is the worst possible persecution. At the close of verse 16, Jesus must have startled them when He said that some of them would be put to death.

Verses 16 and 17 might seem to be a contradiction to verse 18. Notice the prophecy Jesus made.

"All men will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish." Luke 21:17, 18

In verse 16 Jesus had just told them that some of them would be put to death. In verse 17, He told them that everyone would hate them because of Him. Now in verse 18 He contrasts these statements with the promise that not a hair of their heads would perish. There are no major problems with the Greek text in this instance. These statements appear to conflict. There are several possible understandings of the apparent conflict:

1. It is possible that verse sixteen - "they will put some of you to death"- refers to one situation while verses seventeen and eighteen refer to another. This is possible, but not too probable.
2. It is possible that Jesus used a hyperbole in verse eighteen for purposes of emphasis. Hyperbole is an unusual exaggeration for purposes of effect. Hyperbole is not dishonest. He said it in such a way everyone involved knew it was an intentional exaggeration.

Verse 18 - "But **not** a hair of your head will perish" - is a very strong statement. The Greek language does not underline or use bold print for emphasis. It often uses the same word more than once for emphasis - "truly, truly." A common writing tool of Greek authors was, also, to use two different negatives for such an emphasis. That is the case in verse 18. A literal translation would roughly read, " But not a hair of your head will perish." One cannot speak with authority, but I prefer the second option.

In verse 19 there appears to be a problem. It sounds as though Jesus is saying that their standing firm was redemptive. That would disagree with many passages which say that we are saved by grace alone, through faith. A rough translation of the Greek text may prove helpful here.

"In the patience/endurance of you, you will gain the souls of you."
Luke 21:19

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A patient endurance of persecution will keep a Christian from falling away from a saving relationship with God, but w/l not take away his sin. It appears that this is what Jesus was sharing with His disciples.

21:20-24 - The Coming Destruction of Jerusalem

These four verses comprise one of the most devastating statements a Jewish person could hear. Jesus was never brutal, but always honest.

"When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city."

Luke 21:20, 21

In less than 35 years, the armies of Rome surrounded the city of Jerusalem. They laid siege to the city for two years. The suffering and death within the city were enormous. The suicide of Nero made it necessary for the army to hasten back to Rome lest an enemy attempt to take advantage of this power vacuum. Within less than two years, the armies of Emperor Titus were back, determined to take the city. Jerusalem finally fell in 70 or 72 A.D. When Titus's siege was broken, the conquering general destroyed all but a few towers. The rest of the city was demolished. The people were slaughtered or taken captive to be sold as slaves. Before the temple was obliterated, Titus took the ensigns of the Roman army into the temple. This did at least two tragic things:

1. It brought Gentiles into the area reserved for Jewish men only and thus desecrated the temple.
2. The ensigns were symbols of the loyalty of the army to Caesar whom they worshiped as a god. This was a far greater tragedy than the first.

The Jewish protest over this action was intense. It produced hatred and greater determination by the Emperor Titus to humiliate and break the will of the Jewish people. He failed in this plan. Infuriated by the Jewish tenacity, Titus had the city burned and plundered.

Jesus gave instructions concerning their response when the city was surrounded. Those in Judea were to flee to the mountains. Jerusalem is in a mountainous area. The instruction to flee to the mountains was standard procedure. If a person could get into the mountains they had a good chance to hide from plundering armies. The nature of the area meant that there were many caves in which they could find both shelter and protection. The terrain was such that one could escape quite easily from those who pursued.

Jesus advised those in the city to get out. This was difficult for them to hear, but wise counsel. No one wanted to be left in an unprotected area when an army went through. This was tantamount to voluntary captivity. The problem, however, was that if they stayed in the city, they would be under siege and the slow excruciating death by starvation was horrendous. Jesus was telling them that this siege was going to be long and ultimately a failure. They would all die without hope.

Jesus advised those outside the city to stay outside. Again, this was a difficult message to hear. People outside the walls of any city spent a lot of time, goods and money cultivating the friendship of people within the walls. They did this in the good times in order to win their favor. Thus, in a time of crisis they could appeal to these people inside the walls for protection. This seldom worked, but that did not seem to deter any of them.

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Jesus was saying that though it went against their usual wisdom, they should try to protect themselves on the outside of the walls rather than to try to get into the safety of the city. The city seemed secure, but it was a false security.

In the following verses, Jesus explains why He has spoken so strongly.

"For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written." Luke 21:22

It had appeared to the Jews that though they had not paid too much attention to God, yet there were no repercussions. Jesus was prophesying that was an appearance and did not represent reality. These things were in reality punishment that the prophets had foretold over long periods of time. This is historic evidence that God was speaking the truth through the prophets that Israel mocked and killed. Suddenly the day of judgment had come and it frightened them concerning what would happen. They literally did not expect God to keep His word to punish and destroy.

In the closing verses of the paragraph, Jesus gave several illustrations to show the severity of the complete destruction.

"How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." Luke 21:23, 24

These two verses include several illustrations of just how terrible the coming times will be. Pregnant women and nursing mothers were two of the most obvious victims of any war in that day. Pregnancy made it difficult for them to flee from a terrorizing army. Soldiers liked to molest and kill pregnant women because it was doubly a humiliation of the men of the conquered army. Because of the need for speed, nursing mothers found it impossible to give their nursing child the attention it required. Paintings of ancient battles contain many scenes of such women in their plight.

Jesus continued by talking about the great distress in the land. The coming of an army was much more than many men passing through the area. Armies did not carry their own supplies. They took supplies from every person and home they found along the way. If the Roman army took a farmer's supply of grain, he and his family would have nothing to eat. They had no seed for planting when the armies had gone away.

If an army needed beasts of burden, they simply took these away from the farmers. This left the poor farmer with no way to till his field when the fighting was over.

Armies did not bring their own people to do the work. People were captured and forced to work as slaves to accomplish the hard work that needed to be done. Following the destruction of Jerusalem, the Roman army marched on Masada. The Roman officials decided to build a huge ramp to enable the army to get into the fortress. They forced Jewish men and women to undertake the task of building this huge ramp. This was done to enable them to breach the fortress walls. This was dangerous because they had to work between the Roman army and the defenders throwing rocks and hot oil down the mountain side.

The longer it took to carry out a siege, the more angry the army became. This meant that when they conquered soldiers and officers were so angry that they would just

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slaughter everyone in the city. When the soldiers did not slaughter the people, they would take them as slaves. Many such slaves would have much preferred death to the devastation which became their lives as slaves. This was even worse for a Jewish person. They thought of this not only in terms of human suffering and abuse, but as an affront to Jehovah their God. They were the people of God. Any abuse of them was considered a humiliation to their sovereign God.

Jerusalem was the royal city of Jehovah. The idea of Jerusalem, the city God had chosen as the site of His abode with His people, being trampled and conquered by pagan forces was unthinkable to any Jewish person. It is not as though this was a new idea to the people of Israel. Jerusalem had fallen before. Nevertheless, it was beyond their ability to believe that it could happen again.

The closing words of the paragraph tell a haunting tale. Notice the words Jesus used.

"...until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." Luke 21:24c

One must be cautious how he understands these words. Just what is the "times of the Gentiles?" How does one know when these times are fulfilled? Prophecy has never been this author's gift. When the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem, the land was not under total Jewish control for over 1,800 years. Not until the mid-twentieth century did it come under their control, and then not completely. Jewish control of even part of the land today is tenuous at best.

The proof of a prophet's calling was the accuracy of his pronouncements. Verifiable, historical events make it clear that Jesus was indeed a prophet.

21:25-28 - The Coming of the Son of Man

We must keep in mind that this paragraph immediately follows the announcement of the destruction of Jerusalem. If these announcements are chronological, and it appears that they are, then Jerusalem has been destroyed and there are now even greater signs of destruction.

Jesus described these tragedies in vivid terms.

*"There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea."
Luke 21:25*

In this verse, Jesus has identified two kinds of tragedies:

1. Those that affect nature, and
2. Those that affect nations

The signs, of which Jesus spoke, were unusual, miraculous events which gave evidence of the limitless power of God. Jesus mentioned that there would be signs in the sun, moon and stars. It is interesting that this is the place God chose to display the greatness of His power. We must remember that down through human history there have always been people who worshiped the sun, moon and stars. It was a way of saying that God was greater than the objects of the worship of these people. Again, this would be an obvious power. If the sun was darkened, or if the heat of the sun was intensified, no one could possibly miss that shocking event.

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Nations would be plunged into turmoil by the fact that a natural disaster took place in relation to the sea. Hurricanes, and other such natural phenomenon, can cause great havoc on land. This would be enough to throw a nation into turmoil not knowing what to do or which way to turn. Jesus said that this would happen.

Jesus continued with the description by turning to focus on the results of these terrible events.

"Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken." Luke 21:26

Jesus adds a third ingredient to the description of disaster. All the heavenly bodies move in their courses rather smoothly and without our notice. What would happen to us, however, if these heavenly bodies were "shaken?" The word "shaken" is "saleuo" "σαλεύω." It means to shake like a reed; to agitate strongly. If that were to happen, we would be aware of it and distressed to say the least. Jesus said that the effect would be so intense that people would faint because they were terrified. This picture was very significant because the Roman culture involved strategic worship of heavenly bodies. It was a way of saying that God would devastate the heavenly bodies that these people worshiped. Every person who heard Jesus would be aware of that scenario.

This was the final tragedy that Jesus described. We need to remind ourselves that this is a picture of preliminary events. The important part of this future episode has yet to be described.

He then turned to a picture of His coming in the cloud.

"At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Luke 21:27

It is not accidental that Jesus mentioned His coming on a cloud. Jewish people would make an immediate connection. In the Exodus from Egypt, God revealed His redemptive presence as a pillar of cloud and fire which lead Israel all the way. In this new epic of redemption, Jesus, the Son of Man, will come on a cloud. Every Jewish person who heard Jesus would be aware of the parallel that He was drawing.

Jesus referred to Himself as the "Son of Man." He was saying that He would return. If the disciples had the ability to grasp it, He was also telling them that He would be going away before that time. The events that set the stage for the return of Jesus will be cataclysmic events in the heavens where everyone on earth can observe. In the midst of terrible events so tragic that it will cause people to faint with horror, the Son of Man will return - peace in the midst of panic.

When the Son of Man comes in the cloud, he will come with power and great glory. The Jewish people, in their captivity, often paid little attention to God. It was almost as though they were ashamed of God. The Roman powers were arrogant about God. Their ruler was considered a deity and they worshiped him rather than the God of the universe. Jesus was saying that Jehovah would come with a great show of power and glory. Everyone would know and everyone would acknowledge that His power was without limits.

Jesus concludes this paragraph with instructions how one should deal with these horrendous events.

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"When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Luke 21:27

Jesus, speaking of Himself, spoke in the parlance of a king. The instructions Jesus gave were those which governed the people's response to a king. Jesus gave two common instructions:

1. Stand up
2. Lift up your heads

When a king entered a room, people stood out of respect. In our culture we do the same in a court room. When the judge enters the room, people stand. Jesus was talking about their response to His presence. This is another place where Jesus speaks about Himself in royal terms. He was claiming kingship and deity for Himself.

The second instruction was similar in nature. Jesus said, in effect, when a king enters the room, you must give him your undivided attention. They expressed this by looking directly at the king at all times. David, in Psalm 24, dealt carefully with this issue. In his song, David calls upon the gates of the city to open, to lift up their heads because the king of glory was coming. In the same vain, Jesus said, lift up your heads. It was not a call to watch to see Jesus coming on the cloud. It was an urgent instruction for them to acknowledge that He was the king and that He was the ruler over all the earth. Jesus was clearly making this claim about Himself.

We should also notice that Jesus gives a reason for these instructions. Jesus has already drawn a parallel between the exodus from Egypt and the Son of Man.' Now He explains why that was important. The coming of the Son of Man was the sign of the approach of their redemption. Natural and political tragedies were not the keystone to this whole experience, as many now think. The thing to watch for was not the destruction, but the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds. That was what this entire episode was about.

21:29-33 - The Parable of the Fig Tree

The parable of the fig tree is really a parallelism. The speaker takes that image that the hearers know well and shows that it is like something that they do not understand at all. Jesus did this with the growth of a fig tree being parallel to the kingdom of God. First Jesus described the thing that they knew well.

"Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near." Luke 21:29, 30

Both the fig tree and the palm tree were visual symbols for Israel in the time of Jesus. This may account for the fact that Jesus spoke of "the fig tree **and all the trees.**" It seems that if Jesus had only trees in mind, He would not have mentioned one specific tree and then all other trees. Having spoken of them in this way, it appears that Jesus used the image of trees to describe nations or peoples. The crowd would recognize the mention of the fig tree as a symbol of Israel. It is possible that Jesus wanted to include the nation of Israel, but sought some way to involve the other nations in this parable. The thing that Jesus has focused upon is that we can observe, in general terms, the coming of seasons by what is happening to these trees. When the leaves begin to show, summer is near.

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Jesus then turns to the part of the parable with which the hearers were unfamiliar.

"Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near." Luke 21:31

The use of the words "even so" suggest the comparison of things that are similar. Jesus said the appearance of fig leaves suggests the nearness of summer, **so** the coming of the previous events suggests the nearness of the Kingdom of God. Jesus was not trying to establish a schedule of events. He was rather trying to give some general information. This information would enable His disciples to understand what was beginning to happen. Thus, they could prepare themselves for what was about to take place.

The difficulty in understanding this parable is not the inability to grasp what Jesus was saying in the parable itself. That is clear. The problem comes in verses 32 and 33 where Jesus offers assurances concerning the dependability of His message. Notice what He said.

"I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." Luke 21:32, 33

The crux of the matter is in the definition of the word "generation." The meaning of this word has great impact on the understanding of the passage. There are several possibilities:

1. The word "generation" is "genea" "γενεά.. This is the root from which we get our word "genealogy." The word originally identified beginning or birth. It later came to identify a general span of time for one generation, say 30 years or more. Still later, the word was used to identify families, races and nations.
2. Jesus could have meant that the generation of people who were listening to Him on that day would not die before these things began to come to pass. This understanding is very common.
3. If there were younger people in the crowd Jesus could have been saying that their generation would not pass away until these things began to happen.
4. Jesus could have meant that The nation of Israel would not die out before these things came to pass.
5. He could have meant that the Jewish people would not become extinct before these things begin to happen.
6. Jesus could have meant that the families of the people who listened to Him would not pass away before these things started to take place.

It is not possible to speak authoritatively on this matter. My personal position involves these ingredients. As often happens, prophetic messages had two fulfilments - one in the near future and one in the distant future. I believe that is the case here. During the life time of many in the audience, Jerusalem was destroyed. I believe that it also foreshadows events that will take place at the end of time. This means that I believe the word "generation" probably has two meanings: It can mean the lifetime of the people who listened to Him. It could also mean a nation. Israel, as a nation, ceased to exist following the destruction of Jerusalem. It does not mean that there were no Jewish people left, but their nation, as such, ceased to exist. It also appears that this scenario could begin to

happen again. "When the armies gather around Jerusalem," Jesus said, "the kingdom of God is near."

21:34-36 - Jesus Urges His Disciples to Watchfulness

These three verses are separate from Luke 21:29-33, but they are very much a part of the message Jesus gave on that occasion. The problem is that some people focus attention on 21:29-33 and almost ignore 21:34-36. That is a grave error. Jesus gave the information earlier in the chapter to share this warning with those who listened. Observe how carefully Jesus spoke.

"Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap." Luke 21:34

Jesus did not give them a crash course in end-time events. He told them of coming events to warn them to be careful, to be on the alert. The emphasis was not a schedule to follow, but a warning to be alert. His warning was specific. If they failed to be careful, they could find themselves caught in a trap. He used three illustrations to describe the possibilities:

1. Dissipation - the word is "kraipalae" "κραিপάλῃ" which means debauchery.
2. Drunkenness - the word is "methae" "μέθῃ" which means habitual drunkenness.
3. The anxieties of life - the word is "merimna" "μερίμνα" which means to draw apart in different directions. It is the idea of being torn apart. The anxieties of which Jesus spoke were identified - "anxieties of life." The word is "bios" "βίος" which means the things involved in sustaining and maintaining a living. This is a picture of the means of supporting yourself.

As we deal with the details of everyday life, pressures mount. In very subtle ways these three things can close in on us and before we are aware of it, we are trapped. People tend to be instantaneous. We expect things to happen immediately. When that is not so, we often push these things out of our minds. This is because we attempt to cope with things that are happening now. Jesus was warning them to be careful of this tendency.

Jesus continued by giving a reason for His concern.

"For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth."
Luke 21:35

People think of tragedy as happening to someone else. Jesus made it clear that this was a universal problem and required universal alertness. No one is immune; no one will escape it.

People in that era used repetition for purposes of emphasis. In this paragraph, Jesus used this writing tool with great skill.

"Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."
Luke 21:36

He repeatedly stresses the need to be watchful. This verse includes three instructions:

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1. Be always on the watch.
2. Pray that you will be able to escape the coming events.
3. Pray you will be able to stand before the Son of Man.

In the third instruction, Jesus used a figure of speech with which the people were quite familiar. A servant stood in the presence of a king. The servant would not think of sitting without the invitation of the king to do so. To "stand before the king" was to be an acceptable servant. This suggested the king was pleased with him. Otherwise, the king would punish him severely.

Jesus emphasized the tragedy that was coming. He encouraged the disciples to be alert. Having described the horror which was coming, He instructed them to pray that they might escape it. Again, Jesus was stressing the need for alertness, not the schedule of tragedy.

21:37, 38 - Jesus Taught in Jerusalem

These two verses form a quick summary of what happened after the warnings He had given the crowd. In chapters 22 and 23, Luke portrays less than a week in the life of Jesus. In these two verses, we have a glimpse into that phenomenal week.

Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives, and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple. Luke 21:37, 38

An important item on that agenda was Jesus' opportunity to teach the people. Each day, at least until His arrest, Jesus taught on a huge stairway at the temple complex. Rabbis would go there when they wanted to teach their disciples. It offered them a place where they could teach with relative seclusion, but not isolation. It was here that Jesus met the crowds each day. One cannot help but wonder what Jesus taught them during these tense days.

Luke makes a point of the fact that Jesus did not stay in the city of Jerusalem at night. The population of Jerusalem increased many times during Passover. There was room for many guests within the city, but not everyone who came for Passover could find a place to stay within the city. The result was that the wealthy could find accommodations inside the city, but the average person and the poor could not. Jesus repeatedly identified with the poor. He did it again at Passover.

Luke tells us that Jesus went out to the Mount of Olives at night. This hill on the east side of Jerusalem was the site of Bethany and Bethphage. These were little settlements where Jesus had many friends. It would be easy to understand if Jesus went to spend each night in these homes rather than out on the hillside.

When day break came, Jesus had walked the three miles back to the city and was teaching in the temple area. Notice that Luke emphasizes the fact that these people had come out to hear Jesus teach. The way Luke wrote, all the people came out to hear Him.

Conclusion

Jesus' teaching of the widow's offering represents a different understanding of gifts than we commonly entertain. The level of sacrifice is the measure of our gift, not the amount given. Think about that! If you take that seriously, and we should, what changes will it make in your view of yourself and your service to the Lord?

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As you think about the destruction of the temple, the destruction of Jerusalem and the coming of Jesus, what differences will it make in your understanding? What difference will it make in your daily service to God? Do you focus your attention on the destructive encounters of nations or on the coming of the Lord?

Jesus repeated His instruction to be watchful. What does that really mean to you?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 24

LUKE 22:1-71

THE LAST SUPPER; JESUS' ARREST AND TRIAL

1. In the best Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of Luke there are eleven paragraphs in chapter 22. On the table below, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

22:1-6	
22:7-13	
22:14-23	
22:24-30	
22:31-34	
22:35-38	
22:39-46	
22:47-53	
22:54-62	
22:63-65	
22:66-71	

2. Luke 22:1-6 deals with the plot to kill Jesus.
- Read this paragraph carefully. What tie can you find between the coming Passover and the religious leaders desire to get rid of Jesus?
 - Why was Jesus so threatening to the religious leaders?
 - Previously in Luke, the enemies of Jesus had been the Pharisees. Now the urgency to get rid of Jesus rests with the Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law. How can we account for this?
 - Read this paragraph again.
 - Identify from the text the motive of the Chief Priests to "get rid of Jesus."
 - How can we square this with their calling as Chief Priests?
 - What other evidence of motive can you find in this paragraph?
 - In 22:3, Luke described what happened to Judas in this process.
 - What happened?
 - How can we account for this?
 - In 22:4, Judas went to two leaders.
 - Who were they?
 - Why would he go to them?
 - Read 22:5 carefully. Put yourself in the place of these leaders.
 - How would you feel?
 - What action would you take? Why?
 - In 22:6, Luke described Judas' effort to find a way to betray Jesus. Think carefully about this verse.

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- (1). What observation can you make?
 - (2). What does this say about Judas? About the leaders?
3. In 22:7-13, Luke describes the preparation for the Passover.
 - a. In 22:7, Luke explains the events of the Day of Unleavened Bread. Why would he do this?
 - b. In 22:8, of all the disciples, Jesus sent Peter and John to prepare the Passover. What does this tell you about Jesus' attitude regarding service?
 - c. Read Luke 22:9-12 carefully.
 - (1). Why would Jesus give the kind of instructions He gave?
 - (2). When Jesus went to Jerusalem, it appears He stayed with Lazarus and his sisters. When it is time for Passover, He used a luxury home in Jerusalem. How can we account for this?
4. In Luke 22:14-23, Luke described the church's first experience of the Lord's Supper.
 - a. In 22:15, Jesus described His attitude toward this Passover. Describe His attitude in your own words.
 - b. How would you explain what Jesus meant in His statement in 22:17?
 - c. All of the food on the Passover table was symbolic. Why would Jesus choose bread and wine?
 - d. In 22:19, Jesus made a claim about Himself.
 - (1). What claim did Jesus make?
 - (2). What did it mean?
 - e. In 22:19, Jesus instructed the disciples to "Do this in remembrance of me." What did He mean?
 - f. In 22:20, Jesus said, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood." How would you say that in your own words?
 - g. In 22:21, 22, Jesus announced that one of the disciples would betray Him.
 - (1). How would you feel if you were the betrayer?
 - (2). If you were not the betrayer, how would you feel about the betrayer?
 - (3). What does this tell you about the atmosphere on this occasion?
5. In 22:24-30, Luke indicates that a discussion arose over which disciple was the greatest.
 - a. What event, in the context, would lead to such a discussion?
 - (1). Why would the identification of the greatest be important?
 - (2). What would this discussion do to the relationship between the disciples?
 - b. In 22:25-27, Jesus responded to the argument over greatness.
 - (1). What did Jesus mean in His remark about the "Kings of the gentiles?"
 - (2). Jesus described what the relationship between them should be like. What did He say?
 - (3). Jesus used Himself as an illustration. What did He say about Himself?

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- (4). State, in your own words, the way Jesus described greatness.
- c. In Luke 22:28-30, Jesus presents a gift to His disciples.
 - (1). What is the basis of this gift?
 - (2). What does this say about greatness?
 - (3). Identify the three parts to this gift.
 - (4). What is the significance of each part of this gift?
- 6. In Luke 22:31-34, Jesus prophesied about Peter's denial.
 - a. Jesus described a struggle between God and Satan concerning Peter.
 - (1). How would you describe this struggle?
 - (2). How did Jesus say it would be resolved?
 - (3). What does this say about temptation? About evil?
 - b. Read 22:34 carefully. Put yourself in Peter's situation.
 - (1). How would you feel?
 - (2). What would you say?
 - (3). What would you do?
 - c. What is the significance of Jesus' announcement that Peter would deny Him **three** times?
- 7. In Luke 22:35-38, Jesus gave some instructions concerning the disciples.
 - a. There is a contrast between these and those given when Jesus sent them out two by two.
 - (1). What is the difference?
 - (2). Why are the instructions different?
 - (3). What does this mean?
 - b. In 22:35, Jesus asked the disciples a question.
 - (1). What was the question?
 - (2). In view of this paragraph, why did Jesus ask the question?
 - c. In 22:36, Jesus gives another set of instructions.
 - (1). Why was the sword so important?
 - (2). How could they justify selling their cloak to buy a sword?
 - (3). In view of Jesus' comments about peace, how does the statement about the sword fit in?
 - d. In Luke 22:37, Jesus commented about the fulfillment of prophecy in His life.
 - (1). What did He say?
 - (2). What did He mean?
 - (3). What did Jesus mean by His statement "He was numbered with the transgressors..."?
 - (4). As Jesus described it, what did He mean by "fulfillment?"
 - e. In Luke 22:38, the disciples responded, "See, Lord, here are two swords."
 - (1). If you were a disciple and heard this, how would you feel?
 - (2). Why would the disciples make such a response?

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- (3). Why would Jesus say, "That is enough?"
- (4). What would He mean by that statement?"
- 8. In 22:39-46, Luke describes Jesus' prayer on the Mount of Olives.
 - a. In 22:39, Luke wrote that "Jesus went out **as usual** to the Mount of Olives."
 - (1). What does that mean?
 - (2). Why would He go there?
 - (3). What does this tell you about Jesus?
 - b. In 22:40, Luke wrote that Jesus instructed His disciples to "Pray that you will not fall into temptation."
 - (1). Why would He do that?
 - (2). What does this tell you about temptation?
 - (3). What does this tell you about prayer?
 - c. In 22:41, Luke described Jesus' posture in prayer.
 - (1). What was that posture?
 - (2). Why was it significant for Luke to record this information?
 - (3). What does this tell us about our prayer?
 - d. In Luke 22:42, Jesus made a request of God.
 - (1). What was the request?
 - (2). What did the request mean?
 - (3). Why did Jesus address God as "Father"?
 - (4). What does this say about our prayer?
 - (5). Jesus often told His disciples that he was going to die. Why would He request a change now?
 - (6). Reflect on Jesus' statement about "His will" and the "Father's will". What did you learn?
 - e. In 22:43, Luke tells us what happened after Jesus prayed.
 - (1). Did God answer Jesus' request?
 - (2). What was the meaning of what Luke said about the angels?
 - (3). Why was that important?
 - f. In 22:44, Luke tells of Jesus' continued prayer.
 - (1). If God heard Jesus' request, why would He need to repeat the request?
 - (2). Luke described Jesus' emotional state as He prayed.
 - (a). What was His emotional condition?
 - (b). Why would He feel this?
 - (c). What difference does it make that "He prayed more earnestly?"
 - (d). What does Luke add to your understanding by his comment, "and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground"?
 - g. In 22:45, 46, Luke describes Jesus' discovery when He returned to the disciples.
 - (1). What did He find?
 - (2). How does Luke account for the weakness of the disciples?
 - (3). If you were in Jesus' shoes at that time, how would you have felt?
 - (4). What did Jesus say to the disciples?

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- (5). Describe the emotional tone of Jesus' statement.
9. In Luke 22:47-53, he described the tragic betrayal and arrest of Jesus.
- a. In 22:47, Luke described the coming of Judas and the guard.
 - (1). If you were in Judas' shoes, how would you feel now?
 - (2). If you were in Jesus' shoes, how would you feel now?
 - (3). Luke suggests that Judas approached Jesus to kiss Him.
 - (a). Why would it be important for Luke to record that?
 - (b). Reflect on the question Jesus asked Judas in 22:48.
 - (1). What feelings do you get as you think about this question?
 - (2). What was Jesus really asking Judas?
 - b. In 22:49, the disciples responded to the surprise they encountered when Judas came.
 - (1). Why would they ask this question?
 - (2). What is involved in their question?
 - c. In 22:50, Luke reported that a disciple struck the servant of the High Priest and cut off the man's ear.
 - (1). Why would he do that?
 - (2). What does it tell you about the disciple?
 - d. In 22:51, Jesus responded to the action in 22:50.
 - (1). What was Jesus' response?
 - (2). Why would He respond in this way?
 - e. Jesus responded to the presence of the crowd, in Luke 22:52.
 - (1). Luke identified those who were present. What is the significance of this information?
 - (2). What is the emotional tone of Jesus' questions?
 - (3). What was Jesus pointing out by His questions?
 - (4). What did Jesus mean by His remark, "But this is your hour - when darkness reigns?"
10. In Luke 22:54-62, Luke describes Peter's denial of Jesus.
- a. Luke indicates, in 22:54, that Peter followed at a distance. Why is this significant?
 - b. What is the significance of what Luke reports about Peter in 22:55?
 - c. In 22:56, Luke reports the challenge of Peter by the servant girl.
 - (1). If you were in Peter's shoes, how would you feel if this girl said these things to you?
 - (2). What was she really saying?
 - (3). Why would it be important?
 - d. In 22:58, Peter responded to the servant girl's statement.
 - (1). What did Peter say?
 - (2). How did he say it?
 - (3). What are the implications of Peter's response?
 - e. Peter's second challenge is recorded in 22:58, 59.

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- (1). Who made this challenge?
 - (2). What was the significance of this challenge?
 - (3). How did Peter respond?
 - (4). What did Peter mean by his response?
 - (5). What are the implications of Peter's denial?
- f. In 22:59, Luke records the third and final challenge to Peter.
- (1). Who made the challenge?
 - (2). What reason did the challenger give for his accusation?
 - (3). How would this man know that Peter was a Galilean?
 - (4). What difference would it make that Peter came from Galilee?
- g. In 22:60, Peter responded to the third challenge.
- (1). What did Peter say?
 - (2). What are the implications of this statement?
 - (3). What is the significance of the **three** denials?
- h. In 22:60, Luke tells us about the rooster crowing. What is the significance of the fact that the rooster started crowing while Peter was responding to the third challenge?
- i. In 22:61, Peter reacts to the crowing of the rooster.
- (1). Luke tells us that when the rooster crowed Jesus turned and looked at Peter. What would this information add to the story?
 - (2). How did Peter respond to that look?
 - (3). If you were in Peter's shoes, what would you have done?
11. Luke describes the abuse of Jesus in 22:63-65.
- a. List the abusive things the guards did to Jesus.
 - b. Why would soldiers do this?
 - c. Why would soldiers be allowed to do these things?
 - d. What does this say about the Roman judicial system in this instance?
12. Luke describes, in 22:66-71, Jesus' encounter before the Council.
- a. List the groups, from Luke 22:66, who were identified as being present.
 - (1). Who were they?
 - (2). What does their presence tell us?
 - (3). What is the significance of the fact that the Council met at daybreak?
 - b. Luke describes the initial interrogation in 22:67-69.
 - (1). What did they ask Jesus?
 - (2). Why was that important?
 - (3). Study Jesus' response:
 - (a). Did He answer the question they asked?
 - (b). How did Jesus answer them?
 - (c). What did Jesus mean when he said, "If I asked you, you would not answer?"
 - (4). Jesus closed this response with a carefully worded teaching.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 24

- (a). What did He teach them?
 - (b). What did this teaching mean?
 - (c). What is the significance of His statement about being seated "at the right hand...?"
 - c. In 22:70, the Council asked another telling question.
 - (1). What was their question?
 - (2). How was this different from the previous question?
 - (3). How did Jesus reply?
 - (4). Why didn't Jesus simply say, "Yes, I am"?
 - d. The head of the Council questioned the body about Jesus' reply.
 - (1). What did he say?
 - (2). Why did he say it?
 - (3). What reason did he give for his suggestion?
13. Reflect on your study of this chapter.
- a. What did you learn about Jesus?
 - b. In view of this confrontation, what does it say about your faith?
 - c. What changes will this make in the way you live each day?

LESSON 24: – LUKE 22:1-71

THE LAST SUPPER; JESUS' ARREST AND TRIAL

In the best Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of Luke, there are eleven paragraphs in chapter 22. They are as follows:

22:1-6	The Plot to Kill Jesus
22:7-13	The Preparation for the Passover
22:14-23	The Lord's Supper
22:24-30	The Dispute Over Greatness
22:31-34	Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial
22:35-38	The Purse, Bag and Sword
22:39-46	Prayer at the Mount of Olives
22:47-53	The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus
22:54-62	Peter's Denial
22:63-65	The Abuse of Jesus
22:66-71	Jesus Before the Council

22:1-6 - The Plot to Kill Jesus

In this paragraph there is further evidence of the fact that Luke intended this book for Gentile readers. Luke assumes that his readers would not know what Unleavened Bread meant. Notice what Luke said about it.

Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching.

Luke 22:1

The "Feast of Unleavened Bread" and the "Passover" are not the same, but they do come at approximately the same time. In Exodus 12:15-20 there is a description of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This feast lasted for one week - Nisan 15 to 21. During that time they were to do no work except to prepare food. They were to eat only bread without leaven.

Passover, on the other hand, was a special celebration of Israel's release from slavery in Egypt. They celebrated Passover on the 15th. of Nisan. In this respect, Passover was a part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but was not synonymous with it. The Feast of Unleavened Bread celebrated the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Passover, however, celebrated the mercy of God shown by the angel of death passing over the houses of Israel. The angel passed over the homes with blood on the door post. However, the angel destroyed the firstborn males of animals and human beings where there was no blood on the door post. This was a very joyful celebration. Luke suggests the celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was approaching. This meant that they made great preparations. For a month before the celebration, the teaching in the synagogue would deal with instruction concerning the meaning of the Passover. Before the time came, people would go out and paint tombs with whitewash. This was to help insure that pilgrims coming to the celebration would not inadvertently make themselves unclean by touching these tombs. The people repaired the roads so that travelers would be as comfortable as possible in their journey. They checked bridges to insure their safety for the pilgrims. Two days before the celebration, the head of each house would take a candle and carefully

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check every inch of his home to make sure that there were no leaven or products containing leaven in his home. The presence of leaven was strictly forbidden in Exodus 12:15-20.

Luke pointed out that there was a connection between the approach of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the chief priests and the teachers of the law searching for some way to get rid of Jesus. Luke said it this way:

Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. Luke 22:1, 2

This is interesting to me because there was a natural connection of these things in the Jewish mind. Jewish people were looking for their Messiah. They knew that He would come at Passover. The Chief Priests knew this as well as anyone else. It appears that they were afraid that people would proclaim Jesus as the Messiah during this Passover celebration. On the night of Passover, the priests left the temple door open. They did so because they knew that Elijah must come first and they left the door open to welcome him. The Jewish people left a place for Elijah at their Passover table and a chalice for his use. One must wonder, in view of these things, if the Chief Priests were afraid that Jesus might be the Messiah and did not want to release their political power to Him as their messiah. We cannot be sure.

Notice also that the opponents of Jesus have been the Pharisees, but in this instance it is the Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law - the Scribes. This is not surprising because the Teachers of the Law were the legal experts of their religious system. If anyone could find a way to trap Jesus these men could do it.

Luke carefully identified the motive for the planning of these two groups. They were "looking for a way to get rid of Jesus." The word for "get rid of" is "anaireo" "ἀναίρῶ" which means to murder. This represents at least two things that are unworthy of the position that these men held:

1. This represents deliberate deception. If they just wanted to kill Jesus, they could arrange it easily. It would not require extensive planning. They wanted to do it in such a way that it did not appear to be murder. They did not want to be involved.
2. In planning the murder of Jesus, they were intentionally designing a violation of the law. This was outlandish for men committed to upholding the law and known as those most committed to obeying the law. There was no way for them to justify the homicide they were contriving.

Luke also suggests that fear motivated these religious leaders to violate the law they so strenuously upheld. They were afraid of the people. Luke, and the other synoptic writers, have often mentioned that the common people believed that Jesus was the Anointed One and wanted to proclaim Him their Messiah. This, of course, was not what the religious leaders wanted to happen. This difference made the religious leaders fearful. This is interesting because the people had no power and the religious leaders had all the political power available to Jewish people in occupied Israel. Think about this situation. These are supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the nation. Fear motivated them to commit murder. This was immoral. Even the common people knew that this violated the ten commandments. It was in direct contradiction to the law they had sworn to uphold.

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There is some controversy over the reason Judas betrayed Jesus. Luke makes a direct statement about this issue.

Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. Luke 22:3

There may be other motivations, but the primary issue was that Satan came into Judas' life. Satan could not enter into Judas without his willingness. It was the presence of Satan working his agenda through the life of a willing rebel.

There is a question, in the minds of some, about whether the leaders contacted Judas or if he contacted them. Luke clarifies that issue.

And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. Luke 22:4

It is interesting that Judas went to two leaders - one Roman, one Jewish. The chief priests were in charge of the priestly office in the temple. It was necessary for them to work closely with Roman officials. The persons mentioned as "officers of the temple guard" were "strataegos" "στρατηγός" which were the captains of the temple charged with the security of the temple. The priests lined up before one of these officers each day to get their priestly garb to serve in the temple. This was one way the Roman leaders could exert a high level of control over the religious life of the Jewish people. It was as important to the Roman leadership to get rid of Jesus as it was for the Jewish religious leaders.

Judas had to betray Jesus in such a way that the conspiracy would not be obvious. This is the reason that delicate negotiations were necessary. Perhaps the Jewish people did not know, but ever since the Gospel records appeared, the whole world has known.

Never in their wildest dreams could the leaders have expected that one of Jesus' own disciples would betray Him into their hands. This is, nevertheless, exactly what happened.

They were delighted and agreed to give him money Luke 22:5

The word translated "delighted" is "exaraisan" "ἐξάρησαν" which means great rejoicing, exuberance beyond measure. The excitement of these men exceeded their wildest hopes. In the agreement to receive money for betraying Jesus, Judas was not only a betrayer, but also a paid informant. Had his complicity been over anything else, the Jewish leadership would have done away with him.

The text sounds as though Judas left the upper room, betrayed Jesus and immediately led the soldiers to take Him into custody. It was not that swift. After the agreement, time elapsed as Judas sought for an opportunity to betray Jesus to His enemies. Luke described the situation in these terms:

He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present. Luke 22:6

The word "consented" is "exomologeō" "ἐξομολογέω" which means to agree openly. It really means that the agreement was intense. They eagerly agreed. The agreement complete, Judas began the difficult task of finding a way to betray Jesus to His enemies.

Luke is the only Gospel writer who tells us that Judas was to hand Jesus over when there was no crowd present. It gives you an impression of just how frightened the religious leaders were of the people who believed in Jesus.

22:7-13 - The Preparation for the Passover

This paragraph forms the beginning of the Passover celebration. There are many time designations in this Gospel that are general, but this one is quite specific. Luke described it in these terms.

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which people sacrificed the Passover lamb. Luke 22:7

Because their measurement of days differed from ours, we need to be specific. They killed the Passover lamb at the temple on 14 Nissan. Israel celebrated the Passover feast on 15 Nissan. This can be misleading. Actually, both events took place on the same day. Peter or John had to stand in line all day at the temple to kill the sacrificial animal. Because their day started at sundown, the feast was held during the same 24 hour period, though they were different days on the calendar.

Jesus sent Peter and John to make the preparations for the feast. This is significant. These two men were the leaders of the twelve. Nevertheless, Jesus sent them to do the work of preparing for the feast. Jesus practiced what he taught. He sent the leaders to be the servants of the rest of the twelve.

Jesus gave them simple instructions, but it involved much more than it sounds.

Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover." Luke 22:8

The preparation of the food was a great task all by itself. They had to buy the food which was quite a task when there were over two million people in and around Jerusalem for this feast. Because of this, they had to stand in line nearly all day to have their lamb sacrificed. There was the necessity of making sure that there was no leaven on the premises. This was a serious concern to them. Preparing the food would take most of the day by itself.

Jesus did not give them detailed instructions, so they had to ask questions.

"Where do you want us to prepare for it?" They asked. Luke 22:9.

None of the Gospel records identify where this place was or to whom it belonged. Apparently Jesus had arranged in advance to use this upper room. Rabbis often used the room on the roof of a wealthy families home. Here they could teach their disciples with some degree of privacy. The wealthy considered it a privilege to allow prominent rabbis to use the guest room, the room on the roof, as a place to meet with their disciples. This had to be a very large home, a symbol of great wealth. The question of the two disciples suggests that Jesus apparently did not tell the disciples that He had already arranged for their feast.

Jesus' answer was intriguing to them, though we might not recognize it. Jesus said,

"As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there." Luke 22:10-12

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Jesus' instructions would be easy to follow. They were to follow a man carrying a jar of water. Carrying a jar of water was work that only a woman would do. The women of the city might never have seen a man at the well before in their lives. They were to follow this man, probably a slave, to the house of his owner. These men could spot such a person a long way off.

Jesus instructed Peter and John to go into the house and ask the owner of the house where the guest room was. This was unusual because unlike our homes today, almost every house used the same floor plan. There was one room on the ground floor and a smaller room on top of that. The guest room was small. You could reach it by an outside stairway. Why then, would they ask, "Where is the guest room?" It is remotely possible that there was more than one guest room on that roof. Notice that Jesus told them that the owner would show them a "**large** upper room, all furnished."

The feast was an important time. People were required to attend. Therefore, it was not permissible for the home owners in Jerusalem to accept money for their hospitality on these occasions. We know that grateful guests would sometimes give the skin of their sacrificial animal to their host.

We do not know what Jesus and the other ten disciples did while Peter and John prepared for the Passover. You can be sure that these two disciples were extremely busy.

Luke confirms that the disciples followed Jesus' instructions.

They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. Luke 22:13

In this quiet way, Luke told us that Jesus was omniscient, He knew all things. Without being present Jesus could tell Peter and John what they would find when they went into the city.

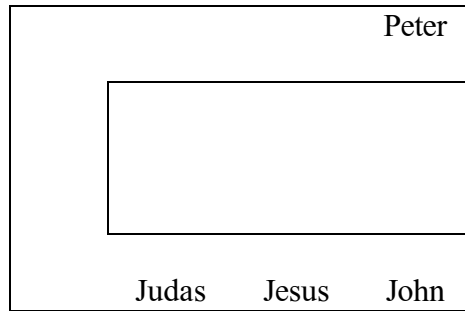
22:14-23 - The Lord's Supper

This was the Passover feast. Every Jewish person within a range of 15 miles of Jerusalem must be present for this important feast. Passover was a joyful observance. It celebrated God's passing over the first born of Israel when He killed the firstborn of Egypt. It became a celebration of Israel's deliverance from Egypt in the Exodus. Passover should be thought of as a time of feasting and celebrating. This is the background of our communion service.

Luke describes the Passover as one who had participated in it. He began his description by saying,

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. Luke 22:14

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the celebration began. Actually, they set the time of the festival by the time the sun set. This, of course, is different every day. Only after the sun had gone down could the feast begin.

Notice that Jesus and the twelve reclined to eat this feast. These people did not have tables and chairs as we have. They reclined to eat. Each person would eat lying down. They rested on their left elbow and ate with their right hand. At this feast, everyone in the household, the owner's family and servants alike, must eat lying down. This was a reminder that when they came from Egypt, they had no poor among them. At other time, servants either ate standing up or ate when the family had finished.

Every Passover was a special time for Jewish people. The celebration of Passover in Jerusalem was an even greater thrill. Jesus had yet another excitement about this Passover in Jerusalem. He said:

"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."
Luke 22:15

The English translation does not adequately express the emotions of Jesus' words. First the word "desire" is "epithumia" ἔπιθυμία which means strong desire, a strong craving, a deep longing. It can also describe lust. A more expressive translation might be, "With burning desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you." Jesus used the word "epithumia" ἔπιθυμία twice to emphasize the depths of His longing.

There is a little phrase that is almost overlooked. He said, "before I suffer." Jesus knows that He is going to suffer very soon. He used this means to tell His disciples again that it would happen. This suggests that Jesus expects His suffering to be soon.

Jesus continued.

"For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." *Luke 22:16*

There is some controversy concerning this verse. At the least, it means that Jesus will suffer before Passover time comes again. Jesus spoke of the fulfillment of the Passover. This suggests that the earthly observance was merely a reflection, a symbol of something greater and more complete shared in the kingdom of God. The Passover is fulfilled when this symbolic Passover loses its meaning in the presence of the completed feast of deliverance which will be fully experienced.

Luke then turns our attention back to the feast.

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After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Luke 22:17, 18

Luke's picture of the Passover feast is not a blow by blow account. Luke describes an entire feast in a few verses. Twice in this paragraph Luke mentions the cup. He was not specific about what he meant. Each person drank four cups of wine in the Passover celebration. We identify these cups of wine in this manner:

1. The cup of sanctification
2. The cup of blessing
3. The cup of redemption
4. The cup of praise.

The text does not suggest which it is, but it appears that the cup that Jesus mentioned in verse 17 is the first, the cup of sanctification. It is at this point that the participants set apart this celebration for the glory of God and the blessing of His obedient people. Luke tells us Jesus gave thanks. The traditional prayer of thanksgiving is this:

"Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, the king of the world, who hast created the fruit of the vine . . . "

With these words the Sabbath celebration begins each week. This Passover feast commences with the same prayer of thanksgiving for the providence of God.

Having given thanks, as the head of the feast should do, Jesus then gave the chalice of wine to the disciples with these instructions:

"Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Luke 22:17, 18

Following the blessing, it was appropriate for the head of the feast to give the wine cup to those with whom he shared the Passover. Jesus, having given the proper instructions, also made an important announcement. He said He would not drink wine until the kingdom of God comes. For many people the "kingdom of God" represents heaven, or at least an event in heaven. This is not valid. It appears that Jesus was saying that He would not drink wine until an event, the cross, took place that would usher in the kingdom of God. The cross was such an event. At the cross, Jesus made it possible for fallen humanity to become citizens of the kingdom. Notice that Jesus has given them another notice that He is going to suffer. They couldn't grasp this truth, but Jesus told them again that He was going to suffer and die.

We should remember that the ritual of the Passover was unchanged for centuries. Suddenly Jesus changed the whole event. Much of what Luke records, concerning this Passover, was a serious change from the Passover as these people knew it.

Luke does not say where the next experience took place in the ritual of Passover. He tells us the surprising change Jesus made in that celebration.

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." Luke 22:19

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The food that Jewish people ate on Passover was symbolic. The menu was as follows:

1. Karpas - The leader gives each participant a piece of parsley or green vegetable dipped in salt water. It is a reminder that God brought Israel through the Red Sea and made of them a new nation.
2. The Passover lamb - This was a reminder that in the last plague God brought upon Egypt, the angel spared the firstborn of Israel. This was because they sprinkled the blood of a lamb on the doorpost of the house.
3. The Matzoh - This was a reminder that Israel left Egypt in haste. They were unable to take the time to allow their bread to rise.
4. Charoseth - This is a mixture of coarsely chopped fruit and spices. It is about the texture of mortar. It is a symbol of the fact that Israel had to make mortar and bricks. They did this without benefit of straw. This was just before their release from Egypt.
5. Maror - these bitter herbs are symbols of just how bitter slavery had been for Israel in Egypt.
6. A hard boiled egg - This is a reminder of just how hard Pharaoh's heart became when Moses brought him word that God said to let His people go.

It is interesting that of all the symbolic food on this Passover table, Jesus chose to use bread. The broken bread, as Jesus used it, was symbolic in several ways. It was a symbol of the abundant providence God had made for the needs of His people Israel. Jewish people are visually oriented. They have four ways to symbolize forgiveness:

1. Share salt with the guilty party. Salt was one of their most valuable possessions.
2. Kiss the guilty party.
3. Bring the guilty party into your home.
4. Share bread with the guilty.

You will recall that each of these were found in the story of the Prodigal Son, as well as in the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers. Jesus offered the Twelve an expression of forgiveness which they were going to need in a very few hours as they abandoned Him in His hour of trial.

Jesus must have stunned His disciples when He said, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." Christians differ in their understanding of Jesus' words, "this is my body." Some Christians believe Jesus was speaking of the bread as a symbol of His broken body. Other Christians believe that Jesus was saying that this bread was literally His body. The text does not solve this issue to the satisfaction of everyone. One thing is clear in the text. Whether it is literal or symbolic, Jesus was saying that His body, as symbolized in this bread, became the means of our redemption. His body would be broken for each of us. Though we are sinners and rebels from God, in the broken body of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and restored.

Jesus gave them an instruction - "do this in remembrance of me." This instruction has two parts:

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1. They are to continue this observance. We seek to be obedient to this instruction as we regularly participate in the sacrament of Holy Communion.
2. We are to remember Jesus in this celebration. The word "remember" "anamnesis" "ἀναμνήσις" is a very intensive word which means to call to mind affectionately. He was saying "I want you to remember again and again the sacrifice I will make for you. Receiving the bread and wine is not enough. He wanted them to remember the source of their salvation with great affection.

Jesus was not finished. He introduced yet another change into the ritual of Passover.

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. Luke 22:20

Two of the four cups of wine we mentioned previously are drunk following supper:

1. The third cup - the cup of redemption
2. The fourth cup - the cup of praise

Because the text is not explicit, we must speak with caution and generosity. I believe the cup of wine, mentioned in verse 20, was the third cup - the cup of redemption. The fourth cup is drunk just before the celebration concludes. The other Gospel records make it clear that this is not the end of the celebration. There is no way to be certain.

Notice that Jesus said that this is "the new covenant." This does not mean that the old covenant became extinct. The promise of a new covenant had the same conditions as the old. God promised to be their God and they promised to be His people. He wrote the new covenant on the heart rather than on tables of stone.

A covenant was a spiritual experience. Covenants always had at least three participants - the two or more human participants agreeing together in the presence of God. They always consummated covenants after a festive meal. Often they sealed covenants in the mingled blood of the participants, making them blood-brothers. This bound them to fulfill their vow with their lifeblood if necessary. Jesus made it clear that He sealed this new covenant in His blood. Our blood would not be effective against the power of sin. We renew our participation in the "new covenant" as we celebrate communion.

Speaking of this covenant in His blood, Jesus gave them another reminder of the fact that he was going to die. He said, "This cup is the new covenant **in my blood, which is poured out for you.**" The New Testament speaks to this issue.

In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Hebrews 9:22

Jesus poured out His blood for us. This is a way of saying He would die for us. His blood would be shed to bring forgiveness of our sins.

This is all that Luke tells us of the Passover celebration itself. Matthew 26:30 tells us that they sang a song, from the Haggadah and then went out to the Mount of Olives. Mark 14:25 says the same. Redemption was more important to Luke than singing, at this point. Here Luke includes Jesus' announcement that one in the group would betray Him. Immediately after saying that He would shed His blood for the disciples, Jesus said,

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"But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays me." Luke 22:21, 22

The contrast between verses 20 and 21 is shocking. In verse 20, Jesus was talking about sacrificial death, reconciliation and redemption. In verse 21, however, He was talking about betrayal, judgment and punishment. In this way, He has perfectly described the atmosphere of redemption. The struggle which Jesus described as "this cup," in Luke 22:42, was not peaceful conquest with universal affirmation. It was the hostile encounter between God and the powers of this world. It was truth locked in life or death struggle with the forces of evil.

In verses 21 and 22, Jesus pointed out several things:

1. One in the group would betray Him.
2. The betrayer's hand was with Jesus on the table.
3. Jesus would still die.
4. Woe to the betrayer.

We do not know the seating arrangement at this Passover celebration, but we can pinpoint the location of some disciples.

1. Judas - Jesus was close enough to Judas to speak privately to him. It appears that the betrayer would also dip bread into the bowl with Jesus. This means that Judas had to be reclining to Jesus' left side - the place of highest honor at a banquet table.
2. John - John 13:25, tells us that John "leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" In order for this to happen, John would have to be reclining to Jesus' right side - the second most honored place at the table.
3. Peter - John 13:24 tells us "Simon Peter motioned to this disciple(John) and said, "Ask him which one he means." To be able to do this, Peter would have to be in the servant's position, across the table to the right.

Only the hands of John and Judas were with Jesus' hands on the table. In Matthew's account, Jesus clearly identified Judas as the betrayer.

The diagram on page 312 should be helpful in visualizing just how the seating arrangement worked out.

Jesus carried out the role of a prophet in this instance. He pronounced "woe" upon the one who would betray Him. We do not know if Judas realized what Jesus said. Jesus was saying that the betrayer would succeed, but in the end he would suffer for his betrayal.

Put yourself into the situation of the disciples. Jesus announced that one of them would betray Him, but did not say which one it would be. What kinds of things would go through your mind? What a way to frighten twelve grown men! This is how Luke recorded it:

They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this. Luke 22:23

At times such as this, all sorts of things go through a person's mind. One would want to make sure that he was not the one Jesus identified. He would have to think of the

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weaknesses of the other eleven in an attempt to discover which one had such potential. At such times, people who are otherwise good friends can become antagonists.

22:24-30 - The Dispute Over Greatness

It is a very short step between the attitudes of "which of these men could do such a terrible thing?" and "I am far superior to these men." Luke described this indelicate feud in delicate terms.

Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be the greatest. Luke 22:24

During much of the ministry of Jesus the issue of whom was the greatest held little importance among the disciples of Jesus. There is seldom a struggle for first place among people facing persecution. Superiority becomes an issue when the first disciple begins to believe that the kingdom was a political entity in which these 12 men might be in line for appointment. Jesus often taught the disciples the opposite of this, but they never quite gave up on the political idea.

The discussion over greatness devastated the relationships between the disciples. If there was any semblance of unity before, it would certainly be gone now. Also, the insidious tentacles of mistrust would reach into the relationships between the disciples and seriously damage it, if not destroy it altogether.

Without apparent distress, Jesus taught the Twelve the meaning of greatness in the kingdom of God. The idea was totally foreign to these men who had heard it and seen it in Jesus' life repeatedly. Jesus handled it this way.

The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves benefactors. But you are not like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. Luke 22:25-27

Jesus was teaching by contrast. He first described the Gentile, pagan understanding of greatness. It is a picture of misuse and abuse. It is a way to control others by fear and anarchy. The deception of ravenous benefactors is as common today as it was in the time of Jesus.

Jesus showed the difference between kingdom members and the pagan position. He stressed this idea by saying, "You are not like that." Jesus' teaching was considered radical in His day. He said, "The greatest among you should be like the youngest," In that culture the greatest was seldom challenged, his views sought, his physical efforts kept at a minimum. By contrast, the youngest had no position at all. When Samuel wanted to see the sons of Jesse, David was the youngest. They did not bring David into the house. They left him in the field with the sheep. Jesus was saying that the greatest in the kingdom will not be the one with the most benefits. The greatest will is the one who sees himself as the servant of the ones over whom he has leadership. He will see himself as the one who has the most to do, not the least. Greatness is a designation of opportunity, not benefit.

Jesus drew another contrast between kingdom greatness and pagan greatness. In the kingdom, the one who rules is like the one who serves tables. In pagan situations, rulers

want others to wait upon them. Within the kingdom, rulers have a waiter's mentality. They live to meet the needs of others. They serve others first and eat later. The difference is like day and night.

Jesus shifts to another example to explain His teaching. He describes the contrast between the owner and the servant. The owner sits at the table and waits for the servant to wait on his every whim. The servant, on the other hand, focuses his complete attention on meeting the needs of his master who is doing nothing at all. At this point Jesus uses Himself as an example. Though He is the Rabbi, still He sees himself as the servant of the group, rather than being the one the group serves. Though Luke does not tell us about it, Mark tells the dramatic story of Jesus washing the feet of the Twelve. This was the task of the lowest servant in the household.

Beginning in verse 28, Jesus is going in a different direction. In truth, He was not. Jesus said,

"You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Luke 22:28-30

Jesus now turned His attention to the twelve. Nevertheless, Jesus is still talking about greatness. He identified greatness by the fact that these men stood by Him in His time of trial. Jesus responded to their faithfulness by granting them three gifts:

1. They were each to receive a kingdom of their own.
2. They were granted to eat at Jesus' table in His kingdom.
3. They were each granted a throne from which to judge the twelve tribes of Israel.

To have kingdoms of their own was a way to describe the power and possessions that each received. It was, however, a different kind of kingdom. Jesus compared these kingdoms to the one the Father had given Him. The kingdom given to Him was the privilege of giving Himself for the lives of the people. The disciples received a kingdom that they might give themselves for others.

The benefits of being great in Jesus' kingdom are obvious. They will receive special places at the table of Jesus, the king. Those who were greatest in the realm received the privilege of dining at the king's table. The twelve would receive that privilege in Jesus' kingdom. They will sit upon thrones. This was a way of saying that they will be people who have power. That power, however, is not to lord it over people, but to find ways to minister to the people of your realm. Israel had a special place in the mind of God and these twelve will have rule over these privileged people. They need to remember, however, that being a judge, within the kingdom, amounts to an opportunity to minister to these people rather than to use them.

22:31-34 - Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial

Jesus turns His attention to Simon with yet another comment on greatness. He said,

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." Luke 22:31, 32

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First, notice that Jesus dealt with this on a personal basis. He called Peter by name. Jesus chose a well known image to illustrate His point. The people were very familiar with the image of sifting wheat. Sifting was a process designed to separate wheat from chaff. They sifted of wheat in three steps:

1. They drove over the wheat with a heavy wooden sled to get the wheat out of the hulls.
2. The wheat was beaten with wooden rods to get even more of the grain out of the hulls.
3. The wheat is winnowed. They used a pitch fork to throw the straw up into the wind. In the process the chaff would be blown away and the wheat would fall back into the pile. They repeated the process again and again until the grain was clean.

Jesus said that there would be a stormy struggle between God and Satan over the faithfulness of Peter. Jesus was not chastising Peter. He was assuring him that his relationship with God was secure. This was just another way Jesus talked about greatness. Greatness, in the kingdom, is not limited to those who never failed. He described greatness, in the kingdom, as the person who having faltered in their faith, returned to their place of obedience. They did this in such a way that they could be of help and strengthening to those who are also weak. This is spiritual greatness. Peter did falter. He denied his Lord. Peter also returned and preached a great sermon on Pentecost. He proclaimed the Gospel repeatedly throughout a long sacrificial ministry. When he returned, Peter was most helpful to those who also failed. Note that Peter's greatness grew out of the fact that Jesus prayed for him, not that Peter was so strong.

Jesus' statement confused many. He said,

"I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail." Luke 22:32b

The confusion here is that Peter faltered despite Jesus' prayer that Peter's faith not fail. We must ask ourselves, how can this be? We must remember that we do falter in our struggle to be faithful, but that is different from abandoning our faith altogether. Greatness, in the kingdom, is not the ability to refrain from ever being weak. Greatness is the quality of being very human and frail, but determined to return to that from which one fell. It involves using that experience as a means to help a weaker brother.

It disturbed Peter to be selected as the example of weakness. We must remember that up until now, Jesus has not identified the betrayer for the whole group. That raised the tension level in the room.

Peter's denial of this charge was strong.

*But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."
Luke 22:33*

Peter's statement was strong, but it was true in his mind. As far as he knew, this was not a boast, but the covenant of a soldier with his king. The fact that it did not work out that way focuses attention on his human frailty, not his integrity.

Jesus' response had to be devastating to Peter.

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Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me." Luke 22:34

It had to be a thunderous shock for Peter to hear these words from Jesus. Peter thought of himself as faithful and loyal. Jesus portrayed him as weak and unfaithful. Really, Jesus was just telling the truth.

We assume that verse 34 describes a conversation that took place in the evening. There are at least two possibilities of what Jesus meant by the crowing of the rooster.

1. The barn yard rooster crows at day break every day.
2. There was a Roman garrison quartered in Jerusalem right next to the temple. They referred to the wake-up call each morning as the crowing of the rooster.

Did you ever wonder why Jesus said "three times"? There are several possibilities:

1. It could be just a way of emphasizing what Peter would do.
2. It could be a prophetic announcement.
3. It could be Jesus' way of affirming that this was truly what Peter would do in a threatening situation. The whole idea of two or three witnesses was strong in the Jewish mind.

22:35-38 - The Purse, Bag and Sword

This is a very difficult passage. The difficulty has more to do with the images it raises than with the problems in the text.

We must remember that Luke has overlooked some important events from this historic evening. He does not mention that following the Passover feast, Jesus and the disciples sang the great Hallel as they did each year at the conclusion of the festival. There is no mention of the farewell speech that Jesus gave. John records this speech in John chapter fourteen.

Luke moves beyond these fond memories to material that is less joyful, but a vital part of the events of that final day before the trial. Having dealt with the inner danger they faced - the denial of Jesus, particularly by Peter; Jesus now focuses His attention on the outer danger, the physical threat to their health and welfare.

Notice that Jesus focuses His teaching on a contrast between two sets of instructions.

1. Instructions He gave when they went out to preach
2. Current instructions about this time of suffering severe persecution.

First, Jesus looks back at His instructions when they went out to preach.

Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" Luke 22:35

Jesus' purpose for reminding them of this experience was to bring to their attention that He had provided every need when there were no other provisions made for them. The emphasis here is on the faithfulness of God in their dilemma. They acknowledged that they lacked when they trusted in Jesus to provide.

Now Jesus focused their attention on what is about to happen. His response seems like a contradiction of the instructions He had previously given.

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"But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one." Luke 22:36

The first question that comes to mind is, "why the switch?" The issues are different. When Jesus sent them out without a purse, it was to teach them to trust God to provide. At this point, Jesus is not teaching providence, but survival in traumatic circumstances.

You probably noticed that Jesus mentioned three things in verse 36 - purse, bag and sword. Look at each of these:

1. Purse - Then, as now, a purse was for carrying money or possessions.
2. Bag - The word bag represented one of two things:
 - a. Prophets and Rabbis carried a "bag," a leather pouch, with which they asked for gifts from the people they taught.
 - b. A bag was also a leather belt in which men often kept their valuables and under which they carried their sword.
3. Sword - this was a short weapon that could easily be hidden in one's clothes.

Jesus was not suggesting that they become violent men. He was suggesting that the times would be such that they would need to defend themselves to survive.

Many people have been disturbed by the instructions of Jesus:

"But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one." Luke 22:36

This verse is controversial. We must first note that it is not clear whether Jesus is saying buy a sword or buy a bag. Either is possible in the Greek text. My own feeling is that Jesus was talking about a sword.

These words would shock Jewish people of that day. The cloak was an absolutely essential piece of clothing. It was their only defense against the cold nights of the region. It seems to me, at least, that Jesus is saying times will be so difficult that it may be more important to have a sword to defend yourself than to have a cloak with which to keep yourself warm on the chilly Palestinian nights. Jesus made a very strong statement and every Jewish person knew it.

Having described the trauma of the times, Jesus proceeds to describe the conditions that make these traumas inevitable.

"It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors, and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.'" Luke 22:37

Notice that Jesus deliberately identified Himself with the prophesy in Isaiah 53. This is an obvious claim that He was the Messiah. The text says more than that, however. He was saying that Isaiah 53 describes His life and ministry. He was also saying that the things described in that prophetic passage had to happen to Him. He further acknowledged that these events were reaching their fulfillment/accomplishment in these events in Jesus' life.

The exchange between Jesus and the disciples seems a bit strange. The response of the disciples related directly to what Jesus had just taught them. They were saying that they did not anticipate such an encounter and that only two of them had brought their personal sword. Many believe that Peter is the one who said these things.

The disciples said, "See, Lord, here are two swords. " "That is enough," he replied. Luke 22:38

We should remember that it was not permissible for civilians to possess weapons under Roman rule. Because of this, two swords were a lot to own.

The insights of this verse are essential to an awareness of the text. Jesus remarked that the two were enough. This was not because two swords were sufficient to deal with the well trained, well equipped Roman garrison. Had Jesus been suggesting that they take swords and deal with the Roman presence in Jerusalem, He would have wanted every disciple to at least have a sword. It was a way of stressing the fact that Jesus was talking about defending oneself rather than aggressive action.

Why would the disciples, who had heard Jesus talk so much of peace, carry weapons? This is not hard to imagine. The disciples were not really in favor of Jesus coming to Jerusalem at this time. They viewed this venture as an invitation to suffering. It was becoming clearer, that because they were Jesus' disciples, anything that happened to Him was apt to happen to them as well. This was a move of self-defense.

Jesus was not talking about carrying out a military operation. He was talking about the danger in which they would find themselves. This is the reason behind His response:

"That is enough," he replied. Luke 22:38b

Two swords were not much help against the Roman soldiers and the mobs that were beginning to oppose them. Jesus was talking about danger, not strategy.

22:39-46 - Prayer at the Mount of Olives

It is as though Jesus invited us into the inner circle of His disciples to participate in a very personal encounter with God. Luke described this experience in careful detail.

*Jesus went out **as usual** to the Mount of Olives and his disciples followed him. Luke 22:39*

It is not clear whether it was Jesus' custom to come to the Mount of Olives to pray or if He just came there to spend the night. The appearance is that He went there to pray. We believe he spent the nights at Bethany, in the home of His friends. Whatever the reason, Luke stresses the fact that it was Jesus' custom to go to this place.

Luke describes this experience as though this was a very familiar spot to all concerned.

On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." Luke 22:40

There was concern, by Jesus, about whether the disciples could stay awake after a large meal and four glasses of wine. He urged them to pray for strength to stay alert when the natural inclination was to rest. In this exchange, Jesus also tells us something about temptation. We usually think of trying harder when confronted with temptation. Jesus pointed out that the solution was in prayer, not struggle.

Luke described Jesus' conversation with the Father in these terms:

He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed. Luke 22:41

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Some conclude, from this verse, that the posture for prayer is on our knees. That is acceptable. That was not what Jesus was emphasizing. Kneeling was the posture of a servant making petition of his master. Jesus acknowledged his position as servant, not the posture of prayer.

Jesus addressed God as "Father." Some think of this only in terms of progenitor. It is more than that. He was the one who cared and gave direction to Jesus' life. He provided and protected Jesus.

As Jesus prayed, He stressed the ongoing ministry of the Father rather than the source.

There is an urgency in Jesus' prayer.

"Father, If you are willing" Luke 22:42

Speaking of the Father's will, Jesus used the word "boulema" "βούλημα" which means a deliberate design. Jesus' humanity surged to the surface and asked if the Father's design would allow Him to forego this tragic experience of death. It was not that Jesus did not know the answer, but something within Him had to check. Jesus said,

"If you are willing, take this cup from me." Luke 22:42

The word "cup" "poterion" "ποτήριον" describes a drinking vessel. I am certain Jesus did not have a drinking vessel in His hands as He prayed. The word "cup" was used in more than one way.

1. It was used to describe a drinking vessel.
2. It was used to describe life conditions, both good and bad. In Psalm 23, David said, "My cup runneth over." He was describing conditions that were extremely good.
3. Jewish people kept their tears of sorrow and joy. They thought of tears as having a character of their own. They kept These precious tears in a "tear cup."

In the Kidron Valley, on the East side of Jerusalem, there is a church called "dominus Flavit" - "Jesus wept." The roof of the church is shaped like a tear drop. On each of the four corners of the church there is a graceful urn shaped like these little glass tear cups. One cannot speak with certainty, but I believe that Jesus was talking about sorrow that was beyond His ability to describe.

Jesus did not stop with the request.

"Yet, not my will, but yours be done." Luke 22:42

The word for "will" in this instance is thelema" "qelhmav." or "desire." Whereas "boulema" "βουλήμα" identifies a deliberate design, "thelema" "θελημα" focuses our attention on God's desire to forgive which makes the design necessary. Jesus was saying that He would like to avoid the trauma of death. It was more important, however, that God's desire to forgive the sins of all mankind be accomplished than to honor Jesus' preferences. This is commitment!

Notice that God does not answer Jesus' request in direct terms.

An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. Luke 22:43

The Father spoke not a word, but His answer was very clear. Instead of answering "yes," or "no," the Father simply sent an angel to strengthen Jesus for the ordeal that was ahead.

Jesus did not need a clearer answer than this. It was obvious that the "will" of the Father required the ultimate sacrifice. We are quietly moving on hallowed ground in this paragraph. The desire of the Father to secure forgiveness for all humanity came face to face with the will of Jesus to live. In that confrontation, the will of Jesus bent with determination to the desire of the Father. It does not mean, however, that Jesus was anxious to die.

And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Luke 22:44

The word "anguish" is "agonia" "ἄγωνιᾶ" from which we get our English word "agony." This word comes from the arena. It describes the intense struggle and emotion that an athlete endured as he competed for the prize. It is this struggle against the seemingly impossible that Luke has described. Jesus wanted to obey His Father, but He also, He wanted to live. In this agony, Jesus prayed "more earnestly." The word Luke used was "exteino" "ἐκτείνω" which is a nautical term which describes the tremendous effort required to lower the anchor. Luke was saying that Jesus now prayed with even greater intensity than before. It is human to want to live. It is just as human to struggle to escape death even when it is clearly impossible to achieve. It is in this vein that Jesus poured Himself into His prayer.

The contrast between the struggling Savior and the sleeping disciples was vivid.

When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. Luke 22:45

The word "sorrow" is "lupe" "luph" which identifies mental or physical pain. Luke has described a form of exhaustion which grew out of the pain of what they had heard that evening. It was the realization that Jesus really was going to die.

Jesus appears devastated that they had fallen asleep when He was struggling so hard.

"Why are you sleeping?" He asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation." Luke 22:46.

It is as though Jesus had said to them, "How could you do such a thing?" He demanded that they get up and pray again that they not enter into temptation. Jesus knew just how close the end was. Unfortunately the disciples did not grasp this fact.

If you look at the parallel passages, in Matthew 26:39-46 and Mark 14:36-42, you will notice a significant difference. In Luke's account, Jesus only returned to the disciples once. Both in Matthew and in Mark Jesus returned from praying three times and found the disciples sleeping. Luke focuses on issues rather than blow by blow events. I would trust the report of Matthew and Mark concerning the number of times this happened.

22:47-53 - The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

The text moves from one of the most intimate passages in the book to one of the most tragic. There is no way to present the betrayal of Jesus in terms that do not leave you devastated. Notice the way Luke reports it.

While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the twelve was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss

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him, but Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" Luke 22:47, 48

As Jesus dealt with the disappointment of His disciples sleeping while He struggled, a worse struggle came to Him. It was not a surprise that Judas would betray Jesus. During the Passover feast, Jesus said this would happen. It was the devastation of seeing one of His own disciples leading the temple guard as they came to take Him into custody. Judas approached Jesus as you would approach a person to give them the kiss of greeting. Judas had to have a sinister mind. He **chose** the symbol of trust as the signal of betrayal. People in that part of the world used the kiss of greeting as a way to show that their intentions were peaceful. It was a way of saying, "I trust you. You can trust me." Jesus was shocked at the callousness of Judas' design.

Put yourself in Jesus' position for a moment. How would you feel if a trusted follower did this to you? It is one thing to betray the Son of Man. It is quite another thing to betray Him with the symbol of trust. The devastation had to be incredible.

The other disciples were as stunned as Jesus was. Notice their response:

When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with the swords?" Luke 22:49

One can understand their question, in spite of its futility. Jesus had said that this would be necessary. Suddenly a situation arises in which this appears to be the only way to survive. In the midst of their shock, they were standing by Jesus.

Luke portrays a very delicate moment.

And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. Luke 22:50

Neither Matthew, Mark nor Luke identify which disciple it was who cut off the officer's ear. John 18:10 is the only one who tells us the disciple's name was Peter. The person identified as "the servant of the High Priest" was not a Jew, but a Roman soldier. This contingent of Roman soldiers was charged with the difficult task of maintaining the peace at the temple itself. If there was to be trouble, this was the most likely place. Certainly Peter was not aiming for the man's ear. It is reasonable to assume that he meant to cut off the man's head and missed.

This loyal display did not impress Jesus.

But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him. Luke 22:51

It is as if Jesus said, "This is far enough!" Luke, in good medical fashion, tells us that Jesus touched the man's ear and healed it. This was not a Jew, but a Gentile that Jesus healed.

Jesus did not dwell on the impetuous response of His disciples, but turned His attention to the religious leaders.

*Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the **elders**, who had come for him, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords, and clubs? Every day I was with you in the temple*

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courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour - when darkness reigns." Luke 22:52, 53

The array of people who came for the arrest gives you some impression of just how important it was to them to get rid of Jesus. Priests and elders were not to be involved in such matters. Nevertheless, here they were. They were also consorting with the hated Romans trying to get rid of their archenemy.

Jesus questions to these men were devastating. He chided them with His first question. "You are so heavily armed, one would think I was leading a rebellion. The truth is that I have been available in the temple every day and you never touched me at all." Jesus' words had to cut them like a knife. They all knew that it was necessary to take Jesus at night. It was not safe to take Him into custody during the daytime. They always faced the risk of an uprising by the people. He identified them as people of the night. In that time they identified "good" with sunlight, they identified "evil" with darkness. Jesus identified them as people of the night. The time they felt most comfortable was the time when darkness/evil rules.

22:54-62 - Peter's Denial

Luke shifts the scene from the Mount of Olives to the home of the High Priest. He lived in the upper city. It is now the middle of the night. Luke described the events in this way:

Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. But when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. Luke 22:54, 55

A person from that era would recognize immediately what Luke emphasized. He talked about Jesus being led away. It is the picture of a man leading his beast of burden in the direction he wants the animal to go. It gives an impression of how they treated Jesus.

There is a running contrast between Jesus and Peter in this paragraph. Jesus was caught up in the abusive control of the religious leaders who are intentionally involved in a miscarriage of justice. These men were sworn to uphold the law. Now, they are perverting the law they have sworn to uphold. Peter, on the other hand, was following the group at a safe distance. We must remember that he was already in difficulty with these people because he accosted a temple guard. If convicted of this crime, he would have been put to death. Peter was trapped. He wanted to know what was happening to Jesus, but he also wanted to stay in a safe place. He could not do both, so he made the risk as low as possible.

In a real sense, Peter betrayed Jesus also. He consorted with the very people who had come to take Jesus into custody. Peter deceived these people. He pretended to be one of them, while in fact he was a loyal disciple of Jesus. Again, sitting down with a group was a symbolic act. To sit down with a group meant that you were at peace with them; there were no problems between the two groups. That was far from the truth and Peter knew it.

Peter's encounter with reality came in the form of a slave girl.

A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him." Luke 22:56

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Peter panicked! There were at least two reasons that he did not have to take this girl seriously.

1. She was a woman and they could not bear witness in court.
2. She was a servant, probably a Gentile or Samaritan, and as such she could not witness in court and no one would pay any attention to what she said.

The Apostle John writes, in John 18:15-18, that he asked the servant girl who was on duty at the gate to let Peter come into the court yard. This servant girl who watched the gate, the lowest servant in the household, was the one who first challenged Peter about being a disciple.

Peter's response could be anticipated. He said to her,

But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him." Luke 22:57

His words were measured, but firm. The strength of his words was that which grows out of fear and not confidence. Peter denied that he had been with Jesus. That was false. He said he did not know Jesus. The word for "know" here is "oida" "οἶδα" which means "to know fully." Peter could have used the word "ginosko" "γινώσκω" which describes the beginning or growth of knowledge. He was trying to make a strong statement, but instead he made a false one.

As usual, Luke is not specific about time. He wrote:

*A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them."
Luke 22:58*

None of the Gospel writers identify the person who challenged Peter the second time. The accusation was, "You also are one of them." The way this person spoke suggests that there was a stigma attached to being one of Jesus' disciples. Luke tells us that it was a man. That, however, was the extent of the identification. We should note that some Greek texts say "woman" instead of "man" in verse 58. None of our best ancient manuscripts agree with that wording.

Peter's response was typical.

*A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them."
"Man, I am not!" Peter replied. Luke 22:58*

There is an increase in the emotional tone of Peter's response. The man would surely know that it would not be wise to challenge Peter again.

Luke becomes more precise about time when he reported the third accusation against Peter.

*About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him,
for he is a Galilean." Luke 22:59*

This happened "about an hour later." Remember, it is very late at night. The accuser bases his charge on the fact that Peter was also a Galilean. This was a fair assumption for the accuser for at least three reasons:

1. They could tell by his dress.
2. They could tell by his accent

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3. Anyone who subscribed to strange religious ideas, as they considered Jesus, was suspected of coming from Galilee. People from Judea thought of the Galileans as short on knowledge and long on zeal.

Peter's response was measured, but more intense. In the other Gospel records it says that Peter took an oath.

Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you are talking about."
Luke 22:60

In the record of Peter's response, all the documents agree with the use of the word "man." John records this encounter differently. In so doing, he has added considerably to our store of information concerning this emotional encounter.

One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, 'Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove?'
John 18:26

Of the three encounters, this was the most telling. This was true for at least two reasons:

1. This man was an eyewitness. He was not reporting what others had said. He had personally seen Peter with Jesus.
2. This man was personally involved. It was his brother who had narrowly escaped death at the hands of Peter. The man was not guessing. He had seen it firsthand. His witness would stand up in court.

Luke records one of the most climactic moments in this entire story.

Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. Luke 22:60

What a climax! Peter had vehemently asserted that no matter what others would do, he would never deny Jesus. Jesus was patient but firm with Peter. He quietly told Peter that he would deny Jesus three times before the cock crowed. In the very act of denying Jesus not once, but the third time, the rooster crowed. What did Jesus mean by a rooster crowing? We immediately think of the chicken that crows at daybreak. It may well have been such a situation. There is one other possibility. There was a contingent of Roman soldiers barracked at the north end of the temple mount. That was very close to the home of the High Priest. Each morning at daybreak reveille sounded as a wake-up call for the soldiers. This was affectionately known as the rooster crow. We cannot be certain which Luke intended. There is a hint, however. It is not conclusive evidence, but Luke said "the rooster crowed." John, in John 18:27 said, "**a** rooster began to crow." In both instances it would appear to be the sound of a chicken that the people heard that morning.

Put yourself in Peter's position for a moment. You are afraid that these people will be able to prove that you were with Jesus in the garden. If they can prove that, you are afraid that you will be incarcerated as Jesus was. You are too concerned about Jesus to leave, but too frightened to stay. Now the evidence is piling up against you. You speak as forcefully as you can, but it seems to make no difference at all. Having denied that you know Jesus three times, the rooster crowed just as Jesus said. How would you feel? ! If that isn't enough, suddenly you look up and cannot believe your eyes.

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The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him. "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly. Luke 22:61, 62

Notice that the location of Jesus and Peter was very close together. We usually think of them being some distance apart. Peter was close enough to see the expression on Jesus' face. He was much closer than he wanted to be then.

It was more than the words Jesus spoke. Jesus looked straight at Peter while the sound of the rooster still rang in his ears. That gaze was more than Peter could stand. Peter had been so busy trying to defend himself and stay out of jail that he had forgotten the announcement of Jesus. Suddenly it all came flooding back. His remorse was more than he could handle. Suddenly it did not matter what these people thought; it didn't matter whether they believed him or not. He had broken his desperate promise to Jesus and it tore him apart. He was out in the street weeping uncontrollably.

22:63-65 - The Abuse of Jesus

Suddenly Luke changes the scene. He had focused on the bonfire outside where Peter denied Jesus. Now the focus was inside the house of the High Priest where they mistreated Jesus.

We should remember that there are several illegal things about the treatment of Jesus. Jesus had not been found guilty of any crime, but he was being treated like a criminal.

The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. They blindfolded him and demanded, "Prophecy! Who hit you?" And they said many other insulting things to him. Luke 22:63-65

Jesus was a Jewish man. Several Roman soldiers, hired to serve in the military contingent in Jerusalem, came from Samaria. The Samaritans hated Jews with a passion. It is not at all surprising that these soldiers mocked and beat Jesus. This was a party for the Samaritans. They made fun of Jesus. They beat Him with thick rods. These were times when some people were inhumane. The blindfolding was a way to humiliate Jesus as well as making fun of His omniscience when He couldn't tell which of them had done this. Some people thought it great sport to make fun of a mentally handicapped person. They would tease them and play tricks on them just to have something, someone to laugh at. In brutal fashion, this is what they did to Jesus. They treated Him like a mentally deranged person. It was all in the name of fun.

Boredom and morale among the troops were a problem for the military. We know, from other sources, that the government outlawed certain games that soldiers liked to play. They played a game of chance and the one who lost was hanged. There were times when the leadership would allow the soldiers to abuse prisoners as a way of raising morale just a little. The soldiers thought the problem over Jesus was a lot of trouble about nothing. The Romans had many gods. One more would not make any difference to them. They enjoyed reminding the Jews that their all powerful God was not strong enough to deliver them from the very human power of Rome. The god of Rome, the emperor, was, in their minds, greater than the God of Israel. Against this background, one can see why they would challenge the omniscience, the all knowing quality of Jesus. They did this by blindfolding Jesus and then hitting Him. This did two things:

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

1. Because Jesus was blindfolded, it was a brutal surprise when they hit him.
2. Jesus stood defenselessly being hit time after time not knowing when the next blow would land.

The challenge to Jesus was not that He absorbed the abuse, but they required Him to identify the person who had hit him when He was blindfolded. No matter whom He identified, they would say it was someone else. If He refused to answer, they would abuse Him even more. In their presence, He could not win.

The Romans prided themselves on their dedication to justice. The soldiers who administered this abuse to Jesus could receive severe punishment for their inhuman conduct. They had convicted Jesus of nothing.

22:66-71 - Jesus Before the Council

This was a tragic episode in an abominable story. It was atrocious that Jewish people did this to Jesus. The fact that it was the religious leaders who masterminded the entire affair is even more despicable.

It was illegal for the council to meet at night unless it was a case of national emergency. It was not an emergency of this nature, but the council met just the same. There is no record of just how many members of the council were present for this middle of the night session. A quorum may not have been present. That did not keep the council from meeting.

Luke records an interesting piece of information when he wrote:

At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them.
Luke 22:66

It is reasonable to assume that a quorum had not been present during the night session, because the group met again at daybreak to make a decision. Had it been legal, they would certainly have voted on the issue before them without delay. As it was, they had to meet again to take their vote when there were enough members present to make their foredrawn conclusion legal.

Notice the composition of the group. This is the largest body of Jewish religious leaders that could be assembled. The Elders of the people, the Chief Priests as well as the Scribes or Teachers of the Law were all present for this important decision.

The trial, as described by Luke, was brief and cursory. Other records give us more information. The concern of the religious leaders was simple and to the point.

"If you are the Christ," they said, "tell us." Luke 22:67

That seems like a simple question to us, but it was one that could have divided the assembled religious leaders for the rest of their lives. It was so important that they dare not take it casually. If a person claimed to be the Messiah it was reasonably certain that the person would die in one way or another. This was, in part, due to the Jewish understanding of the Messiah. Death was the punishment for the false claim of being the Anointed One. If on the other hand, the person was the Messiah, then the people must find out because they had an obligation to worship and serve Him.

THE LAST SUPPER; JESUS' ARREST AND TRIAL

Jesus responded to their claim so that they did not get the kind of answer that they needed to put Him to death. Jesus said:

"If I tell you, you will not believe me, and If I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God." Luke 22:67b-69

Notice that Jesus did not answer falsely, though He did not give them the answer that they wanted. The first thing He said dealt with their own attitude. He knew that they would not believe Him no matter what He said. He also said that if He asked a question, they would not answer Him. This was not stubbornness. Jesus was saying that they would not give Him the kind of treatment that they would give to any Rabbi. Every Rabbi present would be invited to ask and answer questions about the Law. Jesus said that if He asked them a question, as He should have been able to do, they would not have been willing to entertain His question.

Having identified their attitude toward Him and His ministry, Jesus proceeded to teach a truth about Himself that they could not use against Him. The Son of Man was a designation by which Jewish religious leaders referred to the Messiah. Jesus claimed that the Son of Man would be seated at the right hand of God. This was a truth that they had all understood from the Scripture. They could do nothing to Him on account of this statement because He did not claim to be that person. The reference to being seated on the right hand of God was a claim to being the most important and powerful person in the kingdom next to the Father. This is the position that Joseph held in Egypt. Jesus had an opportunity to teach them about Himself without them being able to attack Him for it.

We must remember that Jesus had dealt with the issue of His trial some time before. When He went into the house of Matthew and that of Zacchaeus, Jesus knew that He forever gave up the right to be a witness in court. He could not speak, even in His own defense. Now, Jesus was in a difficult position. If He did witness, they might remind Him that He had foregone that privilege by accepting the invitation to stay in the home of a tax collector. On the other hand, if He did not witness, they would be angry with Him and abuse Him for insulting the group by His silence. Jesus chose to deal with that issue by answering questions that they asked, but never defending Himself in the process.

Because Jesus answered the question that was put to Him, but doing so in such a way that He did not implicate Himself, they were forced to continue.

They all asked "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied, "You are right in saying I am." Luke 22:70

There is a sense of tension in their approach. Here is a single man who is saying nothing and everyone in the Council is nervous because of Him. They finally found it necessary to put the question so that if He answered the question, He would either implicate Himself or bring the whole process to a close. The title "Son of God" was another way of identifying the Messiah, the Anointed One.

Jesus, for a long time had been unwilling to let people know about His power and position because of the trouble it would make for Him prematurely. Jesus never denied that He was the Son of God. He just did not want to precipitate that confrontation prematurely.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

The time for reckoning had come and Jesus was prepared to deal with the issue. Because He had to be careful how He answered even their demanding questions, Jesus did nothing that could be construed as self-defense. When they spoke of Him as the Son of God, He agreed that they were right in saying that He was the Son of God. He did not, however, make such a claim. Finally the issue was on the table. The religious leaders had the one thing they had been trying to get for nearly three years. Notice their response:

Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips. " Luke 22:71

Though Luke does not record it, the questioning had been long. They had a series of false witnesses, but they could not get these witnesses to agree on the details. In view of what Jesus had said, they felt that it was no longer necessary to continue the charade of false witnesses.

Conclusion

This passage represents a tragically beautiful chapter in the life of Jesus. Here several Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled. If you study the paragraph titles at the beginning of this lesson, you will notice that at least two things stand out:

1. There is a list of tragic events described here.
2. Interwoven between these tragic events there are several important teachings about His kingdom and His people.

While dealing with the compromised, dishonest religious leaders in this chapter, Jesus initiates a new covenant with His followers. We call the celebration of this new covenant "communion." This covenant is a renewal. It is the covenant God had made before - "He will be our God and we will be His people." This covenant, however, would be written upon the heart, not on tables of stone. The covenant would be sealed in the blood of an innocent savior, not a helpless animal.

When you **celebrate** communion, remember the meaning of the bread and wine, the forgiveness He offers and the covenant we share.

When He paid such a price, How will you respond to His gift?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 25

LUKE 23:1-56

THE CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH OF JESUS

1. There are six paragraphs in our best Greek manuscripts of Luke chapter 23. On the table below, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

23:1-5	
23:6-12	
23:13-25	
23:26-43	
23:44-49	
23:50-56	

2. In Luke 23:1-5, Luke tells the story of Jesus before Pilate.
- Why would Jesus be taken before Pilate when He had already been found guilty by the Jewish Council?
 - In a Bible dictionary, encyclopedia or other reference book, find out as much as you can about Pilate.
 - In Luke 23:2, the Jewish leaders list the charges against Jesus.
 - List these charges.
 - Evaluate the charges the religious leaders brought.
 - What questions did Pilate ask Jesus?
 - Evaluate Jesus' answer to the questions of Pilate.
 - Evaluate Pilate's judgment of Jesus in light of the evidence.
 - Study the reaction of the Jewish Council as recorded in 23:5. What did you learn?
 - What happened as a result of their response?
3. In Luke 23:6-12 Jesus was tried before Herod.
- Study this paragraph to see how Jesus came to be tried before Herod.
 - What appear to be the motives, on all sides, for this move?
 - In 23:8, Herod was excited to have the opportunity to examine Jesus.
 - What was his motive?
 - How did Herod approach the examination of Jesus?
 - In Luke 23:10 there is a picture of how Herod dealt with the religious leaders. How would you describe this?
 - Study Luke 23:11 in view of the Roman legal system and the emphasis on justice.
 - How did it work?
 - What were the results?

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

- (3).How do the actions of Herod and his guard square with the legal code of Rome?
 - e. Study Luke 23:12 in view of the rest of the paragraph. What did you learn?
4. In Luke 23:13-25 Luke deals with the sentencing of Jesus to death.
 - a. In Luke 23:13,Pilate called the Jewish leaders into conference.
 - (1).This was unusual for Pilate. What was he trying to accomplish?
 - (2).What did he accomplish?
 - b. In Luke 23:14-17, Pilate explains his legal opinion to the Jewish leaders.
 - (1).List the points Pilate attempted to make in his argument.
 - (2).Follow Pilate's reasoning through these verses. How does it work out in your mind?
 - (3).There is a difference between the content in 23:14-17 and 23:18 following.
 - (a). What is the difference?
 - (b). What changes was it responsible for in the results of the trial?
 - c. In Luke 23:19 Luke gives a sidelight about Barabbas.
 - (1).What difference would this make?
 - (2).What problems does this fact create in your mind concerning the request of the Jewish leaders?
 - d. Study the confrontation described in Luke 23:20.
 - (1).What is the legal situation in these verses?
 - (2).Pilate made a major error. What was it?
 - (3).Evaluate Luke 23:23 in view of the reputation of the Roman legal system. What did you learn?
 - d. Study Luke 23:24 carefully.
 - (1).How would you square Pilate's decision with the evidence presented?
 - (2).As you study the trial and the decision, something seems to be missing. What is it?
5. In Luke 23:26-43, Luke described the crucifixion.
 - a. In Luke 23:26, Simon the Cyrene was compelled to carry the cross of Jesus.
 - (1).How were the soldiers able to do this?
 - (2).Why would the soldiers require this of Simon?
 - b. In Luke 23:27, Luke mentions that women mourned and wailed for Jesus. What difference does this make for our understanding?
 - c. On the trip from the court to Golgatha, Jesus stopped to talk to the women.
 - (1).What did He say to them?
 - (2).Read these verses carefully. What did He say that would be a terrible shock to these women?
 - (3).In Luke 23:30, Jesus described something traumatic. What did He say?
 - (4).What was Jesus talking about in these verses?
 - (5).In Luke 23:31, Jesus used a common saying. What did it mean?
 - d. In Luke 23:32, 33, Luke described the crucifixion scene.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 25

- (1). Look at the location of the three prisoners. What significance can you see in this?
- (2). In Luke 23:34, Jesus prayed for His enemies.
 - (a). What did He pray?
 - (b). What did He mean?
 - (c). What is the significance of this prayer?
- e. In the same verse, Luke tells us that they gambled for Jesus' clothes.
 - (1). Why was this significant?
 - (2). Why would they have to gamble for the clothes?
- f. In Luke 23:35 Luke describes the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish rulers.
 - (1). What was their attack?
 - (2). What was their attitude?
 - (3). The Jewish leaders referred to Jesus as "the chosen One." What is the significance of this?
- g. In Luke 23:36,37, the soldiers also mocked Jesus.
 - (1). What was their charge?
 - (2). What is the significance of their participation?
- h. In Luke 23:39 one of the criminals also attacks Jesus.
 - (1). What was his attack?
 - (2). What was the significance of his participation?
- i. In this paragraph Luke draws a contrast between the two criminals.
 - (1). List the information Luke gives you about both men and their positions.
 - (2). Study the prayer of the second criminal. What do you find?
 - (3). Study Jesus' response to this dying criminal.
 - (a). What was Jesus' response?
 - (b). What did He mean by this response?
- j. Look back over the paragraph at the people who attacked Jesus.
 - (1). Who was it that attacked the Lord?
 - (2). What is the message included in this information?
6. In Luke 23:44-49, Luke described the death of Jesus.
 - a. What is the significance of the report that, "The sun stopped shining"?
 - b. In verse 45, Luke included the fact that the curtain of the temple was torn in two. What is the significance of this?
 - c. Just before Jesus breathed His last, He "called out with a loud voice, 'Father into your hands I commit my spirit.'" Why was it important to include this information?
 - d. In Luke 23:47, Luke describes the reaction of the Centurion.
 - (1). What was his response?
 - (2). Why was it significant?
 - e. In Luke 23:48 Luke described the reaction of the people who were watching.
 - (1). What was their reaction?

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

- (2). What did it mean?
- (3). In Luke 23:49 Luke reported about the women who had followed Jesus.
 - (a). Why was this important?
 - (b). What impression do you draw from this?
- 7. In Luke 23:50-56 Luke described the burial of Jesus.
 - a. From the information Luke gives, describe the kind of man you see in Joseph of Arimathea.
 - b. In Luke 23:52, 53, Joseph asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. What does that tell you?
 - c. List the things Luke tells you about the burial. What did you learn from studying this list?
 - d. In Luke 23:55, 56, Luke describes the women's participation in the burial of Jesus?
 - e. In the closing sentence of the paragraph Luke mentions the Sabbath observance. What does this contribute to the story?
- 8. This chapter is as traumatic as it is important. Think carefully about what the chapter teaches for your life.
 - a. What does it say about the way you live?
 - b. What does it say about the way you serve?
 - c. What does it say about your level of commitment?
 - d. What difference will it make in your life?

LESSON 25: – LUKE 23:1-56

THE CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH OF JESUS

Introduction

In our best Greek manuscripts there are six paragraphs in Luke chapter 23. They are as follows:

23:1-5	Jesus Before Pilate
23:6-12	Jesus Before Herod
23:13-25	Jesus Sentenced to Die
23:26-43	The Crucifixion
23:44-49	The Death of Jesus
23:50-56	The Burial of Jesus

As we study the legal process, the difficulties involved become more apparent. This was not a model to train young practitioners of the law. There is ample abuse and misuse of the law. Justice was not well served in this instance.

23:1-5 - Jesus Before Pilate

Some may wonder why they brought Jesus before this council when they made a decision about Him, but did not put it into practice. The Council was an empowered body with stipulated responsibilities and powers granted by Scripture and the people. After Rome conquered Israel, they relieved all Jewish power structures of their authority. The Council remained in place, but their powers were dictated by the Governor of the territory. These religious leaders made decisions concerning religious affairs so long as they did not conflict with the interests of Rome. The former powers of the Council included passing the death sentence upon persons guilty of certain crimes. That was not acceptable to the Roman Governor. Only the Roman Governor could impose the death sentence.

This situation forced the Council to take Jesus to Pilate. This is only the third mention of Pilate in the Gospel of Luke. Luke mentioned Pilate 10 times in this chapter. Jesus, according to the charge made in the council, was guilty of blasphemy. This crime required the death penalty. Being unable to enforce the death penalty, the Council went to the Roman authorities requesting it.

Pilate was the Procurator of Judea with his palace in Jerusalem. He was the authority appointed to pass judgment concerning crimes requiring the death sentence.

Luke gives us an interesting insight as he begins the report of the trial. He makes no accusation, but his intent is clear.

Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate. Luke 23:1

Pilate was the Roman Governor of Judea. He was a Roman by birth and rose to power through the army. He was courageous and successful in battle. The Emperor rewarded him for his heroism by making him Governor of Judea, the most difficult province in the Roman Empire. He was fiercely loyal to the Emperor, but made some unfortunate decisions as Governor. This, in part, may have been because he was well trained in military affairs, but poorly prepared for civil service.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

He brought the Roman standards into the city of Jerusalem. Though this happened in most every other province, previous governors had wisely chosen to leave these symbols outside Jerusalem because of the religious fervor of the people. The standard carried a symbol, and sometimes, a likeness of the Emperor. This offended the strictest arm of the Jewish religious community because the Emperor was a god. The result of this decision caused a serious riot in Jerusalem and many people lost their lives.

On another occasion, Pilate brought a series of decorative shields into the palace. On these shields was a statement dedicating them to the honor of the Emperor. This caused such a furor that Emperor Tiberias ordered Pilate to remove the shields from the palace. The Emperor called Pilate to Rome to explain the slaughter of a large number of Samaritans. By this time Tiberias was no longer the Emperor and Pilate knew that his position was weak. He finally committed suicide ending his ten-year term of office as Governor of Judea.

The case against Jesus was weak, at best. The charge, passed by the Council, was blasphemy. Jesus claimed to be Messiah when, in their eyes, He was not. This crime was punishable by death. The Roman authorities were not interested in the petty religious arguments which were so common among the Jewish people.

To gain the indulgence of the court, the leaders of the Council did two things:

1. They took the whole Council to the hearing. This was a way of adding pressure to the court to hear the case and pass an acceptable judgment.
2. They adjusted the charge to solicit the attention of the court.

Granted, this was both dishonest and manipulative, but it was the only way they could get cooperation from Rome for their desires.

Luke records the presentation to the court:

And they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king." Luke 23:2

The charges that they brought were in three parts:

1. He subverted the nation. The word "subvert" is "diastrepho" "διαστρέφω" which means "to corrupt," "to turn aside the nation from its approved course of action.
2. He opposed payment of taxes to Caesar. Taxes were a sensitive issue in Israel. They paid the highest taxes in the world of that day. After paying taxes, the average Jewish family had only about 20% of their income on which to live. The poor could not live on that much.
3. He claimed to be Christ, a king. Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, but had no political ambitions.

Though they did not tell Pilate, these were not the charges that the Council approved. Two of the charges leveled against Jesus were false. The third charge was a distortion of truth.

1. He subverted the nation. The nation of Israel existed to be a servant of God. Jesus spent His entire ministry trying to get the people and their religious leaders to

THE CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH OF JESUS

return to their God-given purposes. They were trying to corrupt or turn the nation aside from its goals.

2. He opposed payment of taxes to Caesar. This was a blatant lie. Jesus had paid his own tax and provided for the tax of one of His disciples. There is no recorded event when Jesus said that they should not pay tax. There was one event when He taught that they should give to Caesar what was His.
3. He claimed to be Christ, a king. Jesus did claim to be the Christ, the Messiah. In so doing, He was not claiming to be a political figure or to have political ambitions. There is ample evidence that He refused the role of a man seeking to be a political ruler. He refused the invitation. The Jewish leaders said Jesus claimed to be a king. They did this to attract the attention of Roman authorities. They wanted Rome to take a stand against Him as an enemy of the nation.

This is the case that they presented to Pilate. There was much that they did not tell Pilate. Because he had dealt with them before, Pilate knew that there were some things that these Jewish leaders had not told him.

Luke gives us an abbreviated report of Pilate's interrogation.

So Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Luke 23:3

There were probably many other questions that Pilate asked, but this was the crucial issue. This was the most damaging accusation they brought against Jesus. If He considered Himself a king, the Roman authorities viewed Him as a threat. On the other hand, if that were not true, the detention of Jesus was false. Pilate made a very good beginning of his interrogation. If Jesus was "subverting our nation," that would not be a concern for Pilate. Everyone opposed paying taxes. The issue was Jesus paid His tax and did not incite others to refrain from paying. Not everyone, however, claimed to be the king of Israel. Pilate wisely started his questioning by dealing with this issue.

If Pilate found Jesus guilty of trying to become a king, it would be treason and the punishment was death. In that case, the other charges would be meaningless. At best, the other charges could only increase or decrease the level of punishment.

Jesus was on the spot. He often stayed in a tax collector's home. Because of this, he had forfeited his right to speak in court, even on His own behalf. Jesus now faced a dilemma. He was forbidden to speak in court, but the Roman Governor questioned Him. He had no right to speak in court, but He would be severely punished if He did not speak. Jesus solved that problem in a very delicate way.

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. Luke 23:3b

What Jesus said could not be construed as giving testimony in court. He was simply agreeing with what the Governor had said. He satisfied the Governor by giving an answer, but did not put Himself in the position of attempting to defend Himself. He knew that He had forfeited that right. Jesus made no personal assertions. He simply agreed with what Pilate had said.

There was probably much more to the interrogation, but Luke did not include it in his description of the life and ministry of Jesus. Luke described how Pilate handled the most crucial issue and then described the outcome of the confrontation.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man." Luke 23:4

Pilate asked the right questions. He also reached the right verdict. To the best of our knowledge, there was no basis for conviction in anything that the Council presented. Pilate was shrewd enough to realize that the chief priests were trying to use him to get rid of Jesus. His verdict made it clear that he did not believe that there was any case worth pursuing concerning the possible treason of Jesus. This was good judicial practice.

This decision infuriated the Jewish leaders.

But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here." Luke 23:5

This was a calculated move by the Jewish Council. They began their response dealing with Judea. They ended that angry response speaking of Galilee. Galilee was not under the control of Pilate. A more powerful ruler, who bore the title of Herod, ruled northern Israel. The result of this move accomplished three things for the Jewish leaders:

1. It put pressure on Pilate to accede to their wishes.
2. It was a threat to involve the ruler of Galilee in the hope to overturn Pilate's decision.
3. Galilee was known as the home of religious fanatics. This move presented Pilate as the defender of one of these religious fanatics.

23:6-12 - Jesus Before Herod

The name "Herod" is often found in the Gospel records. Unfortunately, the person being identified was not always the same. "Herod" was not a name, but a title. Herod the Great had several sons. Most of these men also served as Governors or Kings in Palestine. The Herod mentioned by Luke, in this instance, was Herod Antipas.

Herod Antipas, 4 B.C. to 39 A.D., was born to Herod the Great and Malthace, a Samaritan. This proved to be a serious problem when he ruled in Galilee. He was given the Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea in his father's will.

Roman officials devastated the city of Sepphoris because the people took part in a riot. Antipas rebuilt the city on a grander scale and made it his capital city. Coins, from 39 A.D., identify Tiberias as the capital of the territory. Sepphoris is just a few miles from Nazareth. It is probable that Joseph and Jesus worked on the construction of the city.

Antipas is the one who imprisoned and beheaded John the Baptist. Sympathetic Pharisees warned Jesus that Antipas wanted to talk with Him. Jesus referred to Antipas as "that old fox" and left the province, never to return.

Antipas and Pilate were not on good terms because Pilate had killed a large group of people from Galilee. This disruption of relationships had gone on for years.

Antipas became involved in some unfortunate dealings regarding the empire. He sided with Sejanus, who was suspected of mounting insurrection. Antipas stockpiled enough arms for a huge army. He also made a confederation with the king of Parthia. The Emperor Caligula called Antipas to Rome to answer these charges. When he was unable to deny the charges, brought by a family member, the Emperor banished to Gaul, where he died.

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Pilate made several unfortunate decisions as Governor, but he was also a careful politician. In the angry response of the Jewish Council, Pilate sensed a way out of this confrontation.

On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at the time. Luke 23:6, 7

In this, Pilate sensed a prudent move by which he could use Jesus to help restore relations between himself and Antipas. He could also avoid this confrontation with the Jewish Council. Thus, Pilate sent Jesus to Antipas, explaining that Jesus came from the territory ruled by Antipas.

It pleased Herod to see Jesus. He sought this for a long time. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him do some miracle. Luke 23:8

Herod had a fascination about Jesus. At first, Herod feared that Jesus was John the Baptist resurrected. This frightened him because he had beheaded John. It was rumored that Antipas wanted to talk with Jesus. This was the way that Antipas often got rid of people who might threaten his position of power.

Add to this the eagerness of Antipas for excitement and luxury. Luke makes it clear that one thing that pleased Antipas about this opportunity was that he hoped that he could get Jesus to do a miracle. He was looking for entertainment while Jesus was on trial for His life.

The meeting of Jesus and Antipas was a struggle at best. Antipas wanted entertainment. He was master of deception and strategy. He would toy with people before putting them to death. Jesus, on the other hand, was direct and above board in His dealings. These men affected each other abrasively.

Notice the frustration that Antipas encountered as he questioned Jesus.

He(Antipas) plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. Luke 23:9

Herod Antipas was unaccustomed to this treatment. When he asked questions, people answered immediately. Jesus just stood in silence. Herod Antipas was the most powerful man in all Galilee, but he was helpless with Jesus. Jesus would say nothing. By doing nothing, Jesus brought everyone's mixed motives to a halt.

Clearly questioning would gain them nothing. They turned in another direction.

The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. Luke 23:10.

This devastated the cause of the Jewish Council. Antipas was their final hope, and Jesus rendered this forum useless. They turned from judicial action to verbal abuse. Sometimes, the more one says, the less effective his cause becomes. This proved to be the case for the Council. Luke gives us no hint of accusations they made. It was probably a rehearsal of things they had said before.

As we said earlier, Herod was infatuated with entertainment. When he could not engage Jesus in a legal pursuit, he turned to his own enjoyment.

Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. Luke 23:11

It may have amused Herod Antipas to treat Jesus this way, but it was contrary to his responsibilities. He must defend each person's dignity until legal action proved otherwise. That had not happened, but he abused Jesus just the same. He seems to have picked up some of his wife's disdain for the Jews. He made fun of the idea that the Jews could have a king while Rome was in control. They made fun of Jesus by placing elegant robes on Him. They gave Him the robes of a king, but treated Him with the scorn of a demented slave.

Whatever else happened, Herod Antipas and the Jewish Council were both deprived of their desires regarding Jesus, at least for the present.

Luke gave a brief often overlooked sidelight.

That day Herod and Pilate became friends - before this they had been enemies. Luke 23:12

Pilate had achieved his plan. He used Jesus to restore relations between two powerful rulers. As we said earlier, Pilate and Herod Antipas became enemies over Pilate's killing of a group from Galilee. Antipas accepted the sending of Jesus to him as Pilate's way to try to right his error. It was accepted and the two became fast friends. This relationship seems to have lasted as long as the two remained in power.

23:13-25 - Jesus Sentenced to Die

As this paragraph opens Luke gives us a glimpse into a conference between Pilate and the leaders of the Jewish Council. They were busy trying to work out an arrangement to avoid a confrontation. It was in the interest of both to find such a solution. Luke described it this way:

Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, Luke 23:13

This was an unusual approach for Pilate. In the past he was more forceful in his administration of justice. We do not know why it was different here. Notice that the Council was present, but "the people" were also present. Pilate has done everything possible to involve interested parties in an attempt to defuse this problem. It is possible that the presence of the entire Council and the people had an effect on him. In the conference, Pilate attempted to explain his views.

And said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. Therefore I will punish him and then release him." Luke 23:14-17

The charge brought against Jesus by the Council was that he incited the people to rebellion. Both Roman and Jewish law required that this claim be established by eyewitnesses. This was impossible. With this in mind, Pilate explained the legal situation in these terms:

1. You accused Him of inciting rebellion, but it was not substantiated.

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2. I examined him **in your presence**. This suggests that there was no doubt in anyone's mind of the fairness of this examination.
3. I found no basis for your charges.
4. Herod examined Him and found no basis for your charges.
5. I must conclude that he has done nothing deserving of death.
6. Therefore, I will punish Him and release Him.

There is something drastically wrong with Pilate's logic in this presentation. If all the things he said were true, then he should simply release Jesus. There is frankly a contradiction between the description in verses 14 and 15 and the conclusion in verse 16. Pilate conceded too much to the gathered members of the Council. The word Pilate used for "punish" was "paideuo" "παιδεύω." This word described the way a parent trains a child. It means to discipline, to correct or chasten with blows or scourge. For a person declared innocent this was far too severe. Such a verdict would call him to defend his action before the Emperor if it came to the attention of the officials in Rome. There had to be something more behind this kind of decision.

Up to this point, Luke has described legal proceedings. It has dealt with the law of the land and of the people. It has dealt with rules of legal practice.

Beginning with verse 18 the legal proceedings turned sour. From this point on it became a mob scene. The proceedings began as a civil request. At this point it turned to a mob demand.

With one voice they cried out, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" Luke 23:18

If they cried out "with one voice," one wonders if this was prearranged. Luke does not tell us, but it is an appropriate consideration. This group is no longer dealing with logic, they are dealing with the kind of pressure that a large group of people can bring to bear upon officials.

The unison cry of the Council involved two demands:

1. "Away with this man." - This means to take this man away for the purpose of death.
2. "Release Barabbas to us."

Clearly the tone of the meeting had changed from request to harsh demands. We know little about Barabbas outside the Biblical record.

If you look at the biblical text, you will notice that verse 17 is missing. The words of that verse are as follows:

Now he was obliged to release one man to them at the feast. Luke 23:17

A study of our best Greek document suggests there is one ancient document that contains this verse, but all the others omit it. Pilate had a custom of releasing a prisoner to the people on the eve of Passover. There is no evidence to suggest that this was an obligation. It was rather a gesture that he extended each year to curry the favor of the people.

Luke gives a little information about Barabbas in verse 19.

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(Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.) Luke 23:19

What a shock! The Jewish Council demanded that Jesus die. They accused him, falsely, of inciting insurrection. They also demand the release of Barabbas who had been convicted of insurrection and murder. Add to the shock of this that these leaders were participating in the very kinds of things that their position in the Jewish community demanded that they oppose.

Pilate may have approached the problem poorly, but his desire was clear.

Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. Luke 23:20

Luke described Pilate as "wanting to release Jesus." The word "wanting" is "thelo" "θέλω" and means to will or desire. It does not represent a very intense form of desire. It appears that Luke was saying that Pilate would prefer to release Jesus, but was not willing to do so at great personal sacrifice.

On the other hand, Luke used the word "appealed" which is "prosphero" "προσφέρω." This means the offering of a gift, to offer a sacrifice. This word suggests that Pilate was reaching out to the Jewish Council in an attempt to find a way to satisfy them without destroying the justice system altogether.

Luke contrasts Pilate's attempt to placate the Council with the harsh unrelenting position of the Jewish leaders.

But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Luke 23:21

The fact that their request was dishonest and illegal, by both Roman and Jewish law, did nothing to curtail their fervor to have Jesus crucified. At that moment, the Council was living a lie. They swore to uphold the teachings of their Scriptures, but flagrantly violated that Scripture to achieve their goal and crucify Jesus.

This was a battle of the wills between Pilate, the political power broker, and Jewish leaders who controlled the mob. Again, Pilate tried to reason with the mob.

For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him." Luke 23:22

One cannot fault Pilate's desire to see justice done. One must wonder, though, why a seasoned soldier and politician would continue to try to reason with a mob. He went through the same logical process they had ignored just moments before. Their purpose was not to reason with a Roman official. They were intent on having Jesus crucified in whatever way necessary.

We should note that Pilate's repeated attempts to reason with the mob make it clear that he knew how innocent Jesus was. He must accept responsibility for the capitulation because of his demonstrated clarity.

The response of the mob was predictable.

But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. Luke 23:23

Pilate's attempts to reason were useless. The Jewish Council made no effort to deal with reason. They were relying on volume rather than quality of thought. It worked!

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This simple verse represents one of the saddest moments in legal history.

So Pilate decided to grant their demand. Luke 23:24

Innocence gave way to the volume of the cry of the mob. Vigilante justice had again punished the innocent and spared the guilty.

So Pilate decided to grant their demand. He released the man imprisoned for insurrection and murder. It was the prisoner they asked for. Pilate also surrendered Jesus to their will. Luke 23:24, 25

Notice that Pilate did not agree that their cause was right. He simply agreed to let them have their way. How can anyone who loves justice read these verses without tears in his eyes? Condemn a man who has done nothing against the law, and release one who has done that and more? !

One is forced to ask, in a system as committed to justice as the Roman legal system was, how could a Governor do such a thing. There is a hint in the Gospel of John. John wrote, of this experience.

From then on Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar." When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). John 19:12, 13.

There was a legal appeal that conquered people could make to be sure that the Governor was dealing justly with them. A conquered people could send a complaint to Rome. The Governor would then be recalled and forced to explain the situation to the Emperor. If the Chief Priests sent a message to Rome that Pilate released a man who incited riot and claimed to be king of the Jews, he would have a difficult time explaining this to the Emperor. That is only the beginning.

Pilate had made some unfortunate decisions in the ten years while he was Governor. Though his predecessors knew better than to do it, Pilate allowed the army to enter Jerusalem with their insignia on their standards. This was a problem because on top of the standards was an image of the Emperor whom they worshiped. This incited a riot killing many people. Eventually Pilate removed them after an emotional confrontation with Jewish leaders in Cesarea Philippi where leaders volunteered to die rather than have these standards in their holy city. Later, Pilate had shields made to decorate the walls of his palace in Jerusalem. On these shields there was a statement which dedicated them to the glory of the Emperor. The Emperor had to force Pilate to remove the shields because of public outcry. In an attempt to win over the favor of the people, Pilate built an aqueduct into Jerusalem, but he paid for it out of temple funds. This infuriated the people. They never quite forgave him for this.

Pilate clung to the hope of securing a release for Jesus right up until the religious leaders mentioned the possible filing of a grievance with the Emperor. It was at this point that Pilate set aside his better judgment and his desire to survive took over. This was unfortunate, because shortly after that the Emperor removed him from the office anyway.

Jesus was sacrificed to enable Pilate to keep his position. Had it not been for this, Pilate would have insisted that Jesus be set free.

23:26-43 - The Crucifixion

Luke does not mention the scourging that took place before the move from the court to Golgatha. Both Matthew 27:27-31 and Mark 15:16-20 report that the Governor's soldiers took Jesus to the Praetorium. This was the palace and headquarters of the Roman garrison. At the Praetorium the soldiers beat Jesus and dressed Him in a scarlet robe. They made a crown from thorns and placed it on His head. They placed a rod in His right hand. Then they bowed down making fun of him before they spat in His face. Only then did they put his own clothes on Him to lead Him to Golgatha.

Any person sentenced to crucifixion had to carry the crossbar of his cross. Contrary to the depiction of many artistic works, condemned criminals did not carry the entire cross. They did not take a direct route to the place of execution, but went past as many streets as possible. The Gospel of John reports that Pilate prepared a sign:

Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. John 19:19

A soldier carried this sign in front of the criminal through the streets of Jerusalem as a warning to others that this is what happens to criminals. Luke does not give us any explanation of why the soldiers compelled Simon to carry the cross of Jesus. Luke wrote:

As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country. They put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. Luke 23:26

It is generally agreed that the beating left Jesus incapable of carrying His cross. Notice that Simon was forced to carry the cross. There was a Roman law which gave a Roman soldier permission to force a captive person to carry a burden a distance of one mile. It was on the basis of this law that Simon was forced to carry the cross. Luke carefully tells us that Simon carried the cross behind Jesus. It was a way to show the crowds who was being crucified.

Luke wrote that Simon "was on his way in from the country. The word "country" is "agros" ἄγρός which means "a cultivated field." Simon came from Cyrene or Cyrenia. This was a seaport city in North Africa, a Roman Province just west of Egypt and about 900 miles southwest of Jerusalem. None of the records tell us, but it appears that he had come all this distance in order to take part in the Passover. Because he touched a bloody cross, he would have been unclean and unable to take part in any further celebration.

Without explanation, Luke tells us that Jesus was followed by a crowd.

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Luke 23:27

These people could be construed as curiosity seekers. There may have been some who were curious, but for most it was more than that. It was a silent protest against the harsh abuses of Rome. It was a way of supporting those who were defenseless against the strong arm of Rome. Luke took special care to mention that several of these people were women. In the near east the women will mourn publicly and very loudly. Many of these women were widows who had experienced great loss. We will mention their participation a little later in the text. Often prisoners had no family present to mourn for them. These people would wail and scream to show great sorrow for the loss of this life.

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Even in His great pain, Jesus took time to care for these mourning women.

Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then 'they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?'" Luke 23:28-31

In this context, the phrase "Daughters of Jerusalem" had a special meaning. Each child was the product of a certain family. The people of the east have a strong sense of community. Others knew them as children of that place. When they were deriding Jesus they spoke of Him as "Jesus of Nazareth."

Jesus' message to these women was prophetic and dealt with the city of Jerusalem. Jesus gave them three exhortations in one. He said:

1. Do not weep for me.
2. Weep for yourselves.
3. Weep for your children.

The word "weep," in all three instances, is "klaio" "κλαίω." This word describes the wailing that these people did to express the grief when a loved one died. It is loud mourning. It was a way that they used to describe coming doom.

Jesus continued with the word "for." This connective suggests a reason for the previous statement. He was going to give a reason for the exhortation to weep for themselves and their children. He said:

"For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'" Luke 23:29

This would shock any person in the near east. These people thought that a baby was the greatest gift they could have. They thought that a barren woman was her punishment from God. For them, a man should divorce his wife if she did not bear a child within ten years. Jesus startled them calling childlessness a blessing.

In true Rabbinic fashion, Jesus turned to the Scriptures for support of His words. The direct quotation comes from Hosea 10:18. These people also knew these as the words of Isaiah 2:19. Jesus said,

"They will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!'" Luke 23:30

Jesus described an extreme tragedy. Things must be catastrophic for people to prefer a natural calamity to their present situation. The text does not say so, but Jesus may have been hinting about Sodom as an illustration of this situation. The people of Palestine thought of the mountains as a place of safety. When trouble came, they fled to the mountains and lived in caves. Jesus speaks of the mountains and hills as a way of painfully escaping the tragedy that is coming. There is little doubt Jesus was talking about the coming destruction of Jerusalem. Conditions, then, were as bad as Jesus related them.

Verse 31 begins with the word "for." This suggests a forthcoming explanation.

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"For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" Luke 23:31

This statement is proverbial in nature. The word picture Jesus used was familiar to everyone. "The green" describes a situation which is much better than the "dry." "Dry" wood burns much more quickly than "green wood." In effect, Jesus said, if these things happen under good conditions, think how much worse it will be later.

In verses 32-34 Luke described the crucifixion itself. Luke wrote:

Two other men, both criminals, followed him to be executed. When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals - one on his right, the other on his left. Luke 23:32, 33

We know that this was a change in normal procedure. They generally held the executions early so that there was no danger of it conflicting with the beginning of the Passover. If that were not possible, they postponed the execution until after the Feast. There are at least two possibilities for the procedural change:

1. The civil leaders were pressured by the Jewish religious leaders to carry out the execution just as soon as possible.
2. The Roman officials wanted to finish this before the greater crowds arrived, lest a riot be incited. The Passover was a high risk time for riots under normal circumstances.

For whatever reason, they crucified Jesus and two criminals with Him. This is significant. Placing Jesus between two criminals, suggested that He was what they were. The text does not say, but it seems reasonable to assume that the religious officials had some input concerning the arrangement of the crosses. It was one more way to attempt to humiliate Him.

They called the place of execution "the Skull." There is great controversy over the location of this place. Some have decided that it is next to the Garden Tomb location. There is a ledge with holes in the side which might be thought of as the eye sockets in a skull. There are others who say that the topography of Jerusalem is like a man lying down. The skull, in this theory, would be near a Roman Catholic church on the west side of the city. No one really knows where it was.

Luke's account of the crucifixion is brief. This was not so in Matthew, Mark or John. The brevity is not in terms of the details listed. It is in the information given these details. The total of the four accounts gives a much fuller understanding than any one account by itself. The following table will give some information about the events of the crucifixion.

EVENT	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
The seamless robe				19:23
The dividing of garments	27:35	15:24	23:34	19:23
The inscription	27:37	15:26	23:38	19:19
Debate about inscription				19:20,22
Derision - build temple	27:39,40	15:29, 30		
Scoffing - Chief Priests	27:41	15:31	23:35	
Stress Jesus - King	27:42	15:32		

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EVENT	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Stress Jesus - "Chosen One"			23:35	
Soldiers scoff			23:36	
Criminal mocked Him	27:44	15:32	23:39	
Mother of Jesus				19:25
Darkness - 9th. hour	27:45	15:33	23:44	
"I am thirsty"				19:28
"It is finished"			19:30	
Broken legs				19:35
Women present		15:40		
Temple curtain torn			23:45	
"Father into thy hands"			23:46	
Death	27:50	15:37	23:46	19:33

Luke quotes a very important message by Jesus from the cross.

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothing by casting lots. Luke 23:34

We need to mention that some ancient manuscripts do not contain this verse. Our best ancient document contains the prayer, but two of those which are almost as good do not contain it. We must be generous in our conclusions. We will deal with it as part of the text.

This prayer is very important. The Scriptures teach that the offer of salvation is universal. That offer must include even those who orchestrated His death and those who carried it out. Jesus was talking about the best trained theologians in the world. He said of them, "they do not know what they are doing." Jesus ascribed to them the benefit of good motive. We are not always that generous.

Notice the contrast in the verse. Jesus is praying unselfishly for His persecutors. Simultaneously, the soldiers are gambling over His clothing.

Then, as now, gambling and drinking was a large part of military life. This was partially because of the boredom that military people experienced. They had nothing to do. To add excitement to their lives, many soldiers took part in a game where they hanged the loser. The Roman army outlawed this game. The execution detail was not the most pleasant. To offset that fact, the four soldiers assigned this duty were allowed to divide the clothing of the executed individual and then sell them. There were four soldiers in an execution detail, but normally a person had five pieces of clothing. They were as follows:

1. Tsitsit - an ankle length T-shirt type garment which had a fringe on the four corners and the mandatory single blue thread to identify them as a kingdom of priests and prevent them from being considered poor.
2. The cloak - a heavier outer garment which the person used to protect himself from the cold of Palestinian nights. This garment could be taken in pledge, but could not be kept during the night lest the owner suffer from the cold.
3. Head covering

4. sandals
5. belt

It would be no trouble dividing items two through five. The tsitsit was a different matter. It was very important and valuable. We know that upon the death of a man, one of the things that were disposed of in his will was his tsitsit. The four soldiers could tear it in pieces, but no one would buy a piece of a tsitsit. Because it was woven as one piece, the soldiers gambled to decide which of them would receive the whole tsitsit.

Luke then turns his attention to those who were present at the crucifixion.

The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." Luke 23:35

The common people stood watching what was happening. Luke does not tell us how they felt about this experience. The religious leaders, however, were a different matter. Luke says that they "sneered" at Him. The word for "sneered" is "ekmukterizo" "ἐκμυκτηρίζω." A better word might be "scoff." The word literally means "from the nose." They used this word to describe holding up your nose in derision or mockery. It was to treat with contempt.

Their words identify the depth and intensity of their derision. They spoke of Jesus "saving" people as though they believed He did. They did not believe it. They were saying that His ability to save Himself should prove whether He was really able to save others.

Notice that the religious leaders said "if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." This was their way of challenging that claim. They used two different titles. Both titles identified the Messiah. The word "Christ" is Greek for "the anointed one." The title "Christ" identified the one God had set aside as His anointed Messiah. The title, "Chosen One" is a different name for the same thing. David was first chosen by God to be king and then "anointed" as king. Their use of these two titles suggests the strength of their challenge of Jesus claim to be the Messiah.

It was not enough for the religious leaders to mock and sneer at Jesus. The soldiers had to be involved as well.

The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." Luke 23:36, 37

We should remember that much of the Jerusalem Garrison of the Roman army was conscripted from Samaria. They had two reasons to mistreat the Jews:

1. Their own lifelong hatred of the Jews. Jews hated Samaritans as half-breeds. The Samaritans hated the Jews as religious fools.
2. The official Roman feeling of superiority over any country they conquered. The soldiers were representatives of that government.

The word Luke used for "mocked" was not "mukterizo" "μυκτηρίζω" as used by the religious leaders, but "empaizo" "ἐμπαίζω" which means to play like a child. It was to make sport or jest about a person. This mockery lacked the venom of the sneering religious leaders. The soldiers were making as much fun of all Jews as they were of Jesus.

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Nevertheless, they challenged Jesus, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." Roman soldiers felt that no one had any hope of escaping a punishment handed down by a Roman governor. They thought that it was ridiculous for anyone to claim to be the king of Israel when the nation suffered defeat by Rome.

In this same verse, Luke tells us that the soldiers offered Jesus wine vinegar. This was the common wine drink of the very poor. The women who usually went to the executions to mourn added bitter herbs to the wine and brought it to the site of execution. This wine put the condemned person into a stupor and deadened the pain as much as possible.

Luke then turned his attention to the official statement of charges against Jesus. They wrote these charges on a sign. A soldier carried the sign in the procession to the place of execution. Then they nailed the sign to the cross above the head of the prisoner. This was not unique with Jesus. It happened with every crucifixion. It was part of the fear campaign that Rome mounted. By this sign they said, this is what happens to lawbreakers.

The listing of Jesus' crime was a devastating attack. Had the Jewish leaders known it, this was an attack on Israel as thoroughly as it was on Jesus. First, let us note that the sign was true. The sign read "This is the king of the Jews." Jesus was the king of the Jews. Pilate spoke forcefully through this sign. In effect, he said, "This is what happens to Jewish kings." It was a way of dramatizing the superiority of the Romans over the Jews. That suggestion was not lost upon anyone present. They all felt it. It was like the penetrating, devastating dampness of a Judean rainfall.

Again Luke changes the focus. This time he directs his attention to the criminals executed with Jesus.

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" Luke 23:39

Note that this is a criminal who is attacking Jesus. There is no basis for him to attack Jesus for anything. His punishment was for a wrong that he had done. Jesus had done nothing wrong. Still, he assailed Jesus. The word "insults" is "blasphemo" "βλασφέμω." It means to blaspheme, to revile, to rail at a person, to injure a person with words. We generally assume that blasphemy was directed against God, but not always.

Verse 40 begins with the word "but." This suggests that there is a strong contrast between the two verses. Luke describes the contrasted persons in this way.

But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "Since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Luke 23:40, 41

The second criminal took issue with his fellow criminal on these issues:

1. You do not have any fear of God.
2. You are going to die. This is no time to blaspheme.
3. We deserve what is happening to us.
4. This man has done nothing wrong

These are reasons why the angry criminal should stop his attack on Jesus. It is a picture of the guilty calling the innocent wrong. The argument of the second criminal was sobering to say the least.

Having silenced his fellow criminal, the second convict turned to Jesus.

Then he said, "Jesus, remember when you come into your kingdom."

Luke 23:42

Whereas the other criminal was angry, this man was submissive. The former criminal did not believe, this man believed Jesus. His request suggests that he believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah. He believed that Jesus would forgive a person such as himself.

The word "remember" is "mimnesko" "μυμνήσκω" and means to remember. They used the word "remember" to describe a memorial. It is a way of saying, do not let me be forgotten. Whatever else, this man was serious about his request that Jesus not allow him to be forgotten, excluded from the kingdom.

Though Jesus was in great personal agony, still He reached out to the dying criminal.

Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43

Jesus prefaced His remark with the statement, "I tell you the truth." This has caused some to wonder if Jesus was telling the truth when He did not use that phrase. There is no reason to believe that. The statement, "I tell you the truth" was a way of using strong emphasis. It meant nothing else. Everyone at the cross understood exactly what Jesus was saying.

The word "paradise" "paradeisos" "παράδεισος" comes from other near eastern languages, namely Persian. It originally meant the epitome of luxury. It later was taken into the Greek language and eventually expressed the idea of heaven. Jesus used it to describe the immediate and ultimate presence of the Father.

For me, the idea of heaven is not so much expressed in streets of gold and pearl. It is to share the eternal presence of the Father and the Son. Jesus said to this man, "Today you will be with me in eternal joy."

There were many other things that took place at the cross. These were the ones that fit into the picture of Jesus that Luke presented to his gentile friend.

Luke presented a major piece of information about the death of Jesus that could easily be missed. In this paragraph, one by one, people turned their back on Jesus. Other than this one criminal, everyone present turned their back on Jesus and rejected His claim to deity. Even His closest friends rejected Him by the safe distance they kept from Him. In several ways, they either dismissed His claim or made fun of His understanding of Himself. Look at the list:

1. The rulers
2. The soldiers
3. Pilate
4. The angry criminal

23:44-49 - The Death of Jesus

Again, Luke shifts the focus of his account. He looked at the death of Jesus. Luke wrote:

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Luke 23:44, 45

The sixth hour roughly parallels noon in our culture. The thing about this day was that it became dark at noon rather than this being the brightest and hottest time of the day. This condition was throughout the area and lasted approximately three hours. This would have caused great fear among all the people. The Romans worshiped one form of the sun god. This would have been understood as a bad omen for them. The Jewish people knew that God controlled the movement of the heavenly bodies. This change would have frightened them as well. God was speaking a clear message to everyone in the city.

Luke uses the word "for" to indicate that an explanation was coming. He described it as the sun stopped shining. I am sure that this was the appearance. We know that the Sun does not stop shining simply because fog or clouds block it out. It does appear that way, however. It can be as dark at noon as at midnight, but the sun does not cease shining. It is simply blocked from our view. A good translation of the Greek text might be, "the sun was darkened."

Luke mentions a miracle which is harder to explain - the curtain was torn in two. The curtain, separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, was huge and heavy. This tapestry curtain was approximately 90 feet high and 30 feet wide. This veil kept people out. Only the High Priest was permitted to go behind that curtain, and then only once a year. When Jesus died, the curtain was torn from top to bottom. In His death Jesus opened not just to the High Priest, but to all the faithful, the access to the presence and forgiveness of God. Jesus is our High Priest and we need no other.

Luke describes the final moment of Jesus' life in graphic terms.

Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. Luke 23:46

Jesus had finished the work for which He had come into our situation. Luke reports that Jesus called out "**in a loud voice.**" This was surprising. Any person undergoing crucifixion could hardly mumble at this stage of their death. Jesus summoned all His strength to talk with the Father. Note that the prayer that Jesus gave, on that occasion, was a quotation from Psalm 31:5 where David wrote the same words. It is a statement of submission, of relinquishing one's very life to the control of the Father.

Every Jewish child learned a prayer to be said before going to sleep at night. It was the words of this verse of Psalm 31. Jesus added only the word "Father" to that verse. It is very possible that Jesus repeated, for the last time before He died, the prayer His mother taught Him as a tiny child.

Jesus breathed His last; He completed His earthly task. This was a common way to describe the end of a meaningful life.

In the same passage, Luke described the effect of these events on those who were nearby.

The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." Luke 23:47

The centurion was the officer in charge of this detail. He must be a valiant soldier. He must also take an oath of allegiance to the Emperor. He must serve the Emperor not just as a political leader, but as a deity. This experience had a transforming effect upon this Roman officer. He had worshiped the Emperor. He suddenly saw deity in a different light. The centurion praised God when He saw what had happened.

The centurion also talked about whom Jesus was. They put Jesus to death as an unrighteous man. The centurion cried out that Jesus was certainly righteous. This was quite a statement for a Roman official. They thought that ultimately no Jewish person could be trusted. This Centurion found a man who was righteous, a man who was what God intended him to be. He was also saying that the Roman legal system had failed in this case.

Luke also described the way in which the people responded. These people were not just curios, though some may have been. Most of them came out of support for their countrymen who were being put to death by an enemy conqueror. Bitter nationalism brought most of them to this horrible spectacle. Luke described it in these terms.

When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. Luke 23:48

The beating of the breast was a symbol of indescribable sorrow. It was their way of saying what words could not convey. They were showing their dissatisfaction with what had happened to a man the religious leaders saw as blasphemous, but they saw as righteous. They knew that the religious leaders had perpetrated a terrible tragedy.

The focus turns again to another group of people who were nearby.

But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things. Luke 23:49

What a devastating report! These were the people who were with Him every day. These were the women who helped pay the support of Jesus and the disciples. Is it possible that this was Luke's way of saying that the disciples were with the women standing at a distance so as not to get involved? It is probably what did happen. Think of the irony of it all. His closest followers standing safely at a distance while pagan people affirmed His righteousness and beat their breasts in silent protest of the tragedy done against Him. Luke was right. They watched all these things, but not so as to become involved.

23:50-56 - The Burial of Jesus

Luke's report is almost like a fast moving movie. He shows one scene and then quickly shifts the focus to a very different scene. That is what has happened in this paragraph as well.

Luke begins the episode with a description of Joseph.

Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God. Luke 23:50, 51

THE CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH OF JESUS

Luke wants us to know just how influential Jesus had become. Here was a man who was a member of the Council of all Israel. He was one of the most influential men in the land.

Luke suggests that Joseph was good and upright. The word "good" is "agathos" "ἀγαθός" which means something that is good in its character, that which is morally honorable. The word "upright," on the other hand, is "dikaios" "δίκαιος" which means just, upright, innocent. It is a description of the Messiah. This was a rare individual, indeed.

Luke's next statement creates a problem. Luke told us that Joseph did not agree with the Council's decision and their action. In 23:1 Luke tells us that the whole assembly "rose and led him off to Pilate." This suggests that the whole Council was in agreement when they went to ask Pilate to put Jesus to death. This seems like a contradiction. The issue is further clouded by the fact that we know there was at least one other believer on the Council - Nicodemus.

There are a few possible solutions to this dilemma:

1. It is possible that Joseph was not present when the decision and action were taken.
2. It is possible that neither Joseph nor Nicodemus were informed of the meeting because their contrary feelings were known.
3. It is possible that Joseph did not vote with the council, but he did not agree with the decision and action they took.

There is no way to be certain about this matter. We do know, however, that the people on the scene were comfortable that Joseph was not a participant in the death of Jesus.

Luke tells us that he came from the city of Arimathea. This city was about 20 miles north and west of Jerusalem. It is also the birthplace of Samuel.

Luke also suggests that Joseph was "waiting for the kingdom of God." This proposes that there were some who were not looking for the kingdom of God. That was true. This suggests that Joseph believed the Scriptures. The Scriptures taught that the Messiah would come. Joseph believed that and looked for that coming in his lifetime. It also suggests that the quality of his life had to match the degree of his expectation. For the flagrant sinner to look forward to the coming of the kingdom of God was to invite disaster. He was a very godly man who was a member of the highest authority in the land. Then, as now, that was a rare situation.

Joseph was not included in this report because he was so devout, but because he did something important in relation to Jesus.

Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. Luke 23:52, 53

This sounds like a generous act. It was far more than that. The law of Israel and of Rome allowed for a person to request the body of a relative so that it could be properly buried. The brothers of Jesus did not come forward to request the body. Joseph did.

Notice that Joseph did not hide to do this. He did not send a representative, but went personally to see Pilate. This means that he was well known to the Governor. The fact that Pilate released the body to Joseph testifies to Pilate's estimate of the character of

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Joseph. Usually only a parent or brother of the deceased could receive such a favor. Joseph was not concerned about revealing to Pilate that Jesus was important to him.

Luke also tells us several things about the burial:

1. Joseph took the body down. He could have hired someone to do this. Then, he would not have to be seen in relation to the crucified person. Identification with Jesus did not bother Joseph.
2. He wrapped the body in linen. This is what the wealthy would do. Linen was very expensive, but Joseph was willing to pay that price to properly bury the body of Jesus.
3. Joseph placed the body in a tomb. The poor would never have afforded a tomb. They would often have to bury their dead in an unfortunate fashion, but they could not afford a tomb.
4. This tomb was cut out of the rock. That suggests that it was even more costly than a regular tomb. The cost for people, Like Jesus' foster-father Joseph and Jesus Himself to cut a tomb in such a place was high. Joseph was willing to pay it.
5. This was a tomb in which no body had ever been laid. Though the text does not say, this suggests that the tomb was one that Joseph had prepared for himself and members of his own family. Because of his position and his wealth, this would have been an elaborate arrangement.

There was a problem that Joseph encountered as he tried to prepare the body for burial.

It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. Luke 23:54

This was a very special time of the year. On this day, two holy times begin. It was the time of the beginning of Sabbath observance. It was also the beginning of the Preparation for the observance of the Passover. In both instances no work could be done. In our culture, we might argue that this is something that had to be done because the body would decompose. They did not view it that way. It was the beginning of the Sabbath and the Day of Preparation and all work must cease. They stopped the preparation of the body and rested as the law required. They could complete the preparation of the body when the day of rest had ended.

Notice how Luke described this process:

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Luke 23:55

These women had been at the crucifixion, although they stood some distance away. They followed Joseph to the tomb because they wanted to see that Jesus was cared for properly. They wanted two things:

1. They wanted to see the tomb where Jesus was to be laid.
2. They wanted to see how Jesus' body was laid in the tomb.

This was a symbol of great concern even in untoward circumstances.

Without the benefit of funeral directors, the burial of a loved-one was a sizeable task. Everything had to be done by family and friends.

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Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment. Luke 23:56

Jesus' family took no active responsibility for the care of His body. Joseph of Arimathea took that responsibility upon himself. He provided everything that had to be done.

When the Sabbath observance had ended, the women were free to do the things that needed to be done before the body of Jesus could be buried. They prepared the spices and perfume. We need to remember that this is a very hot climate and a body will decompose very quickly. Because Jewish people did not embalm their dead, they had to resort to strong spices and perfumes to cover the odor of decaying flesh. The women made these preparations. The text does not say so, but it appears that they also paid the bill for these expensive herbs and spices. That bill would be high.

Almost as an afterthought, Luke tells us that it was important to prepare the body for burial. Still these women took the time to rest on the Sabbath as the law required. Nothing was allowed to stand in the way of the Sabbath observance.

Conclusion

On reflection, mixed emotions prevent us from deep understanding of all that makes up this chapter. We are excited that in Jesus Christ we have been redeemed from the sin which ruled our lives. We are shocked and saddened by the inhumanity Jesus endured to pay the price of our redemption.

On the other hand, the costly gift of our salvation was so great, we can never repay it. In the grip of these emotional churnings we stammer words of exhilarating joy and reverent awe that thunder through our minds:

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me . . .

When you contemplate the gift of your salvation, what does awe demand of you? When falling prostrate before Him is not enough, what visible, tangible response do you demand of yourself?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 26

LUKE 24:1- 53

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS

1. In our best Greek documents there are six paragraphs in Luke chapter 24. On the table below write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

24:1-12	
24:13-27	
24:28-35	
24:36-43	
24:44-49	
24:50-53	

2. In Luke 24:1-12, the author speaks about the resurrection.
- In Luke 24:1, Luke, who has been very general concerning time and place designations, suddenly becomes very specific.
 - What does this tell you?
 - Why would this be important?
 - In view of 24:1, what did the women expect to find at the tomb?
 - Why would these women go to the sealed tomb alone knowing there was a huge stone over the entrance?
 - Put yourself into the shoes of these women.
 - What would you feel as you walked to the tomb?
 - What would you think when you saw the stone was moved?
 - What would you think when you entered the tomb and discovered the body was missing?
 - In 24:4, 5, Luke describes the angelic messengers who spoke to the women.
 - What do these two verses tell you about the emotional condition of these women?
 - How did the women respond to the presence and message of these divine messengers?
 - If you were one of the women going to the tomb:
 - How would you deal with the guards who were there to keep you out?
 - Whom would you expect to move that huge stone?
 - You are taking burial spices to apply to the body of Jesus. How would you be thinking about Him?
 - Study the question asked by the messengers.
 - State the question in up to date vernacular.
 - What does this question say about the thinking of these women?
 - In Luke 24:6-8, the angels/men reminded the women of Jesus' teaching in Galilee.
 - Compare what the angels reported here with what Jesus taught in Galilee.

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- (2). How would these men/angels know these teachings?
- g. In Luke 24:9, the women reported these events to the Eleven.
 - (1). If you had been there, how would you feel when you heard their report?
 - (2). Why would Jesus give this miracle to these women rather than the disciples?
- h. In 24:10, Luke gives the names of three women, but leaves others nameless. Why would he do this?
- i. There is a contrast between 24:11 and 12.
 - (1). What is the contrast?
 - (2). What did you learn from it?
- j. In 24:12, Luke tells of Peter and John racing to the sepulchre.
 - (1). In view of Peter's recent experience, why would he go to see if this report was true?
 - (2). How did Peter respond to what he saw?
 - (3). Think of yourself as **Peter**. How would you feel when you discovered the women gave an accurate report?
 - (4). Think of yourself as **John**. How would you feel when you discovered the women gave an accurate report?
- 4. In Luke 24:13-27, Luke tells of Jesus' encounter with two men on the way to Emmaus.
 - a. The conversation of the men suggests they were thinking about the women's report that the tomb was open and the body was gone. How can we account for the fact that these two disciples "were kept from recognizing him?"
 - b. In Luke 24:17-19, Jesus spoke to the two men as though He knew nothing about recent events involving Himself.
 - (1). Was He in any way dishonest or deceptive?
 - (2). Why would Jesus speak as He did?
 - (3). Was He successful?
 - (4). List the things that the two men from Emmaus told Jesus about Himself. Why would these pieces of information be important here?
 - c. In Luke 24:20, 21, Cleopas described what happened to Jesus recently.
 - (1). Whom did he blame for these atrocities?
 - (2). Read Luke 24:20, 21, again. What is the emotional tone of the statement?
 - (3). There is an emotional contrast in these verses.
 - (a). Identify the contrasted emotions.
 - (b). What do you learn from this situation?
 - d. In Luke 24:21-23, Cleopas told Jesus of the women's report.
 - (1). Why would Cleopas stress the "third day?"
 - (2). If you were a disciple hearing the report, how would you feel about the missing body and an angelic vision?
 - (3). How much credence would you give to the women's report that Jesus was alive?
 - e. In Luke 24:24, Cleopas reported Peter and John's trip to the tomb.
 - (1). Why would Peter and John go to the tomb, but not the other disciples?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 26

- (2). Read the verse again. What emotions can you discover there?
- (3). How would Peter and John feel when they confirmed the women's report?
- (4). How would Peter and John feel when they did not see Jesus?
- f. In Luke 24:25, 26, Jesus responded to the report of Cleopas and his friend.
 - (1). How did Jesus treat these two men?
 - (2). Why did Jesus mention prophets?
 - (3). Why would the Christ "have to suffer these things?"
- g. In 24:27, Jesus identified what the Old Testament said about Him. What difference would this make?
- 5. In 24:28, 29, Jesus "acted as if he were going farther." Why would He do this?
 - a. In 24:30, 31, Jesus ate with the two men.
 - (1). Jesus "took bread, gave thanks, broke it..." What does this tell us?
 - (2). In 24:31, it says "their eyes were opened."
 - (a). What was responsible for this?
 - (b). What did they see?
 - (c). What did Jesus do then? Why was that important?
 - b. In 24:32-35, the two responded to the revelation of Jesus.
 - (1). What was their response?
 - (2). What did they mean, "Were not our hearts burning within us..."?
 - (3). Why did they need to return to Jerusalem immediately?
 - (4). There are two reports in 24:33-35. What is the primary focus of each report?
- 6. In Luke 24:36-43, Luke tells of Jesus' revelation of himself to the disciples assembled at Jerusalem.
 - a. Read 24:36 again. How would you feel if you were one of the disciples?
 - b. How did the disciples respond to this discovery in 24:37?
 - c. In 24:38, 39, Jesus dealt with their response.
 - (1). What questions did Jesus ask?
 - (2). How did He help them deal with their question?
 - d. In 24:40, 41, Jesus asked if they had any food.
 - (1). Why was Jesus concerned about food when they were struggling with these events?
 - (2). What difference would it make?
 - e. In 24:45, Luke tells us that "He opened their minds." In 24:31, Luke reports, "Their eyes were opened."
 - (1). What is the difference, if any, between these two statements?
 - (2). What do these statements mean?
 - f. In 24:45, Jesus reviewed His previous teachings for them.
 - (1). How does this help our understanding?
 - (2). Why were these Old Testament teachings important for Jesus to explain here?

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- g. In 24:45-47, Jesus linked His death and resurrection with repentance and forgiveness for sin.
 - (1). How does **He** link these ideas?
 - (2). In verse 47, the preaching of forgiveness in Jesus' name begins in Jerusalem and moves through all the nations. Why must it begin in Jerusalem?
- h. In 24:48,49, Jesus commissioned the apostles and other disciples.
 - (1). If they are to be witnesses, why must they stay in Jerusalem to receive the Father's promise?
 - (2). What is the relationship between the commission, in 24:48, and the waiting in Jerusalem in 24:49?
- 7. In Luke 24:50-53, Luke described the ascension.
 - a. Luke tells us that the ascension took place in or near Bethany.
 - (1). Why would it be there?
 - (2). Why was it not in Jerusalem?
 - b. Why was it important, in 24:50, to report that Jesus lifted His hands to bless the disciples?
 - c. In 24:52, 53, Luke described the disciples' response to the ascension.
 - (1). What was that response?
 - (2). How can you explain the three responses?
- 8. As we reflect over the resurrection and the ascension, we need to ask some personal questions.
 - a. Compare your personal response to the resurrection with that of the Apostles and disciples.
 - (1). What is the difference?
 - (2). What does it mean?
 - (3). What action will you take because of this?
 - b. Compare your response to the ascension to that of the Apostles and disciples.
 - (1). In what ways are they different?
 - (2). In what ways are they the same?
 - (3). What does it mean?
 - (4). What will you do on the basis of your discovery?

LESSON 26: – LUKE 24:1-53

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS

Introduction

There are six paragraphs in our best documents of Luke chapter 24. They are as follows.

24:1-12	The Resurrection of Jesus
24:13-27	The Walk to Emmaus
24:28-35	Jesus Reveals Himself
24:36-43	Jesus Appears to His Disciples
24:44-49	Jesus Explained His Resurrection
24:50-53	The Ascension

24:1-12 - The Resurrection of Jesus

At this point, the followers of Jesus thought of Jesus as dead, gone. They had heard Him talk about rising from the dead. They apparently did not expect to see it.

As the Sabbath began, the women had been preparing to put the spices on His body. The women had to interrupt that process because it would have required that they work on the Sabbath. Nothing was that important to them. The Sabbath having ended, they were free to continue with their work. It is important to remind ourselves that the physical family of Jesus accepted no responsibility for the care of Jesus' body at all. These women, who had followed Jesus, accepted that responsibility.

It is interesting to me that John 19:39 gives a slightly different picture of the events of this time.

He (Joseph of Arimathea) accompanied Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. John 19:39, 40a

Did the two men bring the ointment and spices, or did the women do so? We cannot say. One thing is clear. The care of the body of Jesus was provided not by His family, but by one or both groups.

There is reason to believe that the women had not thought through what they were doing. They started out to put the spices on the body, but they did not know if the stone could be rolled away to enable them to do it. Would the Roman guards allow it? What large group of men would be there to move that huge stone? Apparently none of these things entered their minds.

One thing is clear. When the women came to the tomb, they expected to find Jesus dead. They went to the tomb to care for a task commonly done for a dead body. Luke described it this way:

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. Luke 24:1

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The women had started to prepare the spices and ointments before the Sabbath. They finished this task and took these preparations to the tomb to apply to the dead body of Jesus. These faithful disciples anticipated applying these spices on the strips of cloth with which the dead body was wrapped. They were not aware of it, but that was not going to happen.

An observation is in order. Almost every religion has a tomb that is special to them. We know where Buddha was buried. Mohammed was buried in a place where Muslims visit if possible. Each of these religions has a special grave. The body of their founder is still in that grave. The Christian faith is different. We do not have a body in a special grave. To be frank, we do not know which of the two possible locations is really the place where Jesus was interred. The place of His interment is not as important as the knowledge that He is risen.

Notice that the report of finding the stone moved was without emotion.

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. Luke 24:2, 3

Notice that it says "they found the stone rolled away." I have seen pieces of art which depicted the stone as a rectangle. It was not that way. The opening of a tomb had a flat vertical face. In front of that opening was a "U" shaped trough in which they rolled a circular disc of stone into place. This "U" shaped trough was on an incline. It would be very easy to roll the stone into position. It would be much more difficult to roll it away from the door of the tomb. This stone would be very heavy. It would require several strong men to move it.

There is a hint here that the women did not realize what had happened even when they saw the stone moved. It also appears the women were not aware of what had happened when they saw the body missing.

The absence of the body of Jesus was very important, but we need to be clear about its meaning. Many things could happen to a body. The enemies of Jesus could have moved it. The followers of Jesus could have moved it, as some enemies of the faith have asserted. That would be difficult with the Roman guard present, for his life depended on his carrying out the orders to guard the tomb. We know that it could also be that Christ had risen. We base our belief in the resurrection on more than an empty tomb. We will deal with this at length shortly.

Imagine what must have gone through the minds of these women. They came to give the body of their Lord its final expression of love, but He was not there.

While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" Luke 24:4, 5

The word "wondering" is "diaporeo" "διαπορέω" which means "to be utterly at a loss," "to be in doubt," "to be perplexed." This was so shocking that they were completely at a loss to understand or explain what had happened. Although Jesus said that it would happen, it never entered their minds to consider this possibility. It appears that the women just stood in the tomb thinking, trying to figure out what had happened. Were the Roman guards still there? We do not know. It appears that they were not, but we cannot

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be sure. All four Gospel records include the story of the resurrection, but none of them mention the guards.

Apparently, until now the women had been standing in the tomb alone. Suddenly they were no longer alone. Luke tells us that there were two men standing there with them. Luke gives this information about the two:

1. They were described as men.
2. They were suddenly standing with the women.
3. Their clothing gleamed like lightning. This is essentially the same description that was used of Jesus at the transfiguration. This is the awesome task of describing glory.
4. The two men talked with the women.

It appears that these "men" were angelic beings. In Matthew 28:5, he speaks of this person as an angel. The text is not clear, but it seems appropriate to hold that these men were angelic beings.

Luke described the response of the women to the sudden appearance of these angelic beings.

In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" Luke 24:5, 6a

"Fright" is a compound word "emfobos" "ἐμφοβος" which literally means 'in fear.' Fear is "fobos" "φόβος." "Emfobos" "ἐμφοβος" is a more intense form of fear. We might translate it "terrify." The terror these women experienced was as severe as it could be. The fact that they fell down with their faces to the ground suggests that they thought it must be God and they were afraid to look upon Him.

The response of the angels contrasted the actions of the women. The angels did not acknowledge the fear and bowing down of the women. It was as though the women had done nothing at all. The angels simply asked, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" This question highlights the expectation of the women that Jesus was dead. We look for living people in houses, not tombs. The women looked in the tombs because they expected Jesus to still be dead. Notice that the women did not answer the question.

Isn't it just like God? People, in that culture, considered women to be of lesser importance than men. God, however, chose to make the very first announcement of the resurrection to a group of women. The angel said, "He is not here; he has risen!" Look for Jesus among people who are alive, not in the cemetery.

It must have been clear to the angels that these women did not understand what was happening. The angels directed the attention of the women to a teaching situation back in Galilee.

"Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again." They remembered his words. Luke 24:6b-8

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One wonders how the angel knew about this experience where Jesus taught His disciples in Galilee. The women remembered the time when Jesus told them He was going to die.

And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Luke 9:22

That, of course, is exactly what happened. The angel was saying that the crucifixion and resurrection were a fulfilment of Jesus' prophetic message in Galilee.

The women went back to the gathering of Jesus' disciples.

When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. Luke 24:9

It appears that the eleven disciples were together. It also appears that there were many other disciples gathered with them. Where was this large gathering? We do not know for sure. The gathering could have been in the home of a wealthy follower of Jesus. This could have been the home of the man who let Jesus and the disciples use his large upper room for the Passover celebration. It could have been the home of Lazarus. It could also have been the home of Simon whom Jesus healed of leprosy. We know that when excavators found Peter's mother-in-law's house, there were 24 rooms in it. There were disciples who had homes this large. It appears that it was a house of this size.

Luke included the names of some women who went to the tomb.

He listed Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the Mother of James and the others with them who told this to the apostles. Luke 24:10

Mary Magdalene came from a town not far from Nazareth in Galilee. The Gospel records do not say, but some authorities believe that she was the woman of the street who washed Jesus' feet with her tears. There is no way to be sure, but I believe that this was true. If so, God honored this woman who had once been so degraded, but in Jesus Christ had become a new creature. We can be certain that she is the one from whom Jesus had cast out many demons. We do not know the source, but she was a woman of some means and helped support Jesus and the disciples in their journeys. She followed Jesus as He traveled from place to place preaching and teaching.

Joanna was also with the women who went to the tomb. She was an amazing woman. She was the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. Chuza was responsible for the entire household of Herod Antipas. He was in Herod's household what Joseph was in Pharaoh's palace. No one in the service of Herod Antipas was trusted more than Chuza. There is no record that Chuza was a follower of Jesus, but it is possible. We know that his wife was a dedicated follower of Jesus. She accompanied Jesus on His last trip from Galilee to Jerusalem. She helped to pay for the needs of Jesus and the disciples. She was one who was to help prepare the body for burial. We know that Jesus healed her of the evil spirits and certain infirmities. Gratitude was a major reason for her support of Jesus and His work. One wonders how she could take such a public stand as his follower when her husband held such an important position in the household of Antipas. Herod was intrigued with Jesus, but he was not particularly fond of Him. Politically it would have been risky for Chuza to allow his wife to be away from the court so much. This would be

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particularly true when she was following Jesus. Even when Jesus had difficulty with Roman officials, she did not cease to publicly identify with His followers.

Mary the mother of James was also present. The Scriptures speak of her as Mary the wife of Clopas. There have been some who identified Clopas with Alphaeus. If this is true, then he may be the brother of Joseph, Jesus' earthly father. Besides this possible family tie, we do not know why she followed Jesus. Apparently, Clopas was a man of some means. She also helped provide for the financial needs of Jesus and the disciples. She was one of those who, despite the dangers, stayed with the followers of Jesus even after the crucifixion.

Luke gives us only the names of these three women. We know there were more. It is uncertain why Luke does not include the names of the other women. It may be that it was surprising that these women who represented wealth and position, were willing to take the risk of being identified with Jesus and the disciples. We know that the husbands had to be unusual men to allow their wives to be away as much as they were. It took great strength to permit their wives to identify themselves with a man as controversial as Jesus was.

Luke suggested that these were the women who told the apostles what had happened. Put yourself in the place of these women trying to explain this situation to the apostles. You know what you saw, but it was not affecting those to whom you brought the news. The frustration of this report had to be tremendous.

Luke described the reaction of the apostles to the news brought by the women.

But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Luke 24:11

Jesus had told them that He would die and rise again. He had prophesied that he would die by the efforts of the religious leaders. That is exactly what happened. When He told the disciples that He was going to die, He also told them that He would rise from the dead. They did not believe or understand any of these announcements. Jesus had told them plainly several times. Jesus had hinted at this information repeatedly. Still, they did not believe. It was not different when these women came with their report. One wonders why.

There are several possibilities. First, we must remember that these are women. In that culture people did not put much trust in the report of a woman. She could not give her witness in court. Usually, she would not even speak in public. From a human point of view, the disciples had no reason to put much credence in the report that the women brought.

Another reason may be the report itself. These women brought a rather startling report. Jesus had told the disciples this would happen, but it was so bizarre that they did not even believe His word. From a human perspective, it would take a naive person to believe that someone would rise from the dead. That was not the way things happened. The word for "nonsense" was "leros" "ἄηρος." It means "idle talk," "an empty tale." They discounted the report because it did not make sense to them. They knew that when people die, they stay dead. No one could prove differently. This report of the tomb being open and the body missing had to be too much for the disciples.

The disciples also had a problem with trust. Like so many of us, they tended to trust only what they could explain. This means that there was no trust at all. This miracle required that they believe something that they could not reproduce or explain. That was difficult for reasonable men.

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True to form, Peter was the one who would say what others were afraid to say; he would examine what others dismissed. Luke describes it this way:

Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened. Luke 24:12

As we said earlier, Luke's report of this experience is just the opposite of that given by John. In John's Gospel, he arrived at the tomb first. He was the one who stooped over to look into the tomb while Peter ran on in. We do not know how to account for this. We know it is possible that our preoccupation with these concerns causes us to miss the main message of the verse.

Think of it for a moment. Peter promised that he would not deny Jesus no matter what happened. As we saw earlier, when confronted, he denied Jesus three times. Notice, however, that he did not just go away. He faced the failure and stayed with the disciples. When the message came about the empty tomb, Peter was there. Peter probably found it as difficult to believe as any disciple, but he was the first one to make a move to see for himself. I like that in him. Peter was eager to discover how much truth there was to the report the women brought. He ran to the tomb. I wonder, how did Peter know the location of the body? We are not sure. It is possible that he followed the group to the tomb, at a distance, as he had followed Jesus to the place of execution.

Peter was confused when he saw the strips of linen which had been wrapped around the body of Jesus. Luke said that Peter "went away wondering." The word "wondering" is "thaumadzo" "θαυμάζω" which means "to marvel," "to wonder." It is a sense of awe mixed with fear. Peter saw that the grave was empty, but he did not yet know what had happened. He went away filled with amazement mixed with awe; he was troubled over a circumstance he could not understand. The text never suggests when Peter figured out what had happened. Luke just changes the scene.

24:13-27 - The Walk to Emmaus

In this scene, Luke focuses our attention on two other disciples. These men left the safety of the rest of the disciples and went to Emmaus. This was a village some seven miles west and a little north of Jerusalem.

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. Luke 24:13

This is about a two-hour walk from Jerusalem. Luke gives us no more information about their destination or mission. There will be more hints later, but at this point none of that information is obvious.

A resurrection would be the talk of the town. It was on this occasion. Luke said,

They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. Luke 24:14-16

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Put yourself in Jesus' position. These disciples are talking about your death and you are walking along with them. This would be an unusual situation.

It is interesting to note that Luke suggests that these two men "were kept from recognizing Him." These men apparently knew Jesus quite well. They were concerned about Him. They were talking about what had happened to Him. One wonders how they could be kept from recognizing Him. Could Jesus have had a different countenance following the resurrection? God could have hindered their ability to recognize who Jesus was? We do not know, but it is an interesting point to ponder.

It may seem inconsequential, but there is another clue concerning the post-resurrection condition of Jesus. He was walking along with these two men from Emmaus. Some have said that the resurrected Jesus was not fully human. In verse 15, Jesus was involved in some very human activities, walking and talking.

Jesus pursued the conversation by asking questions of the two men.

Jesus asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

Luke 24:17

Mind you, Jesus did not say that he didn't know what they were talking about. There are some who have said that Jesus deceived the two. He did not. He simply asked them what they were talking about. It was a way to open the conversation. That is exactly what happened.

Luke records their dire response in careful detail.

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one living in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have happened there in these days?" Luke 24: 17b, 18

Great sorrow covered the faces of the two men. The Lord they loved and in whom they believed had died. If that were not enough, they heard this day that the tomb was empty, the body was gone. Their downcast faces were understandable.

Luke gives us the name of one of the two men. This "Cleopas" should not be confused with "Clopas," the husband of Mary the mother of James. They are two very different men. We have no clue concerning the identity of the other traveler to Emmaus.

Cleopas answered in shock. "Are you the only one living in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have happened there in these days?" These are the words of one too shocked to believe what he heard. Cleopas was convinced that everyone in the area knew all the details. He was probably right.

Again, Jesus engaged him in conversation by asking a question.

"What things?" He asked. Luke 24:19a

Jesus knew what Cleopas was talking about, but he wanted the him to discuss it. There was valid design in what Jesus was doing. He was trying to involve Cleopas in a meaningful conversation about the resurrection.

Cleopas took the time to explain the issues to Jesus.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. Luke 24:19b

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In this small portion of a verse, Cleopas described who Jesus was. He will go on to say much more, but here the emphasis is to identify the person of Jesus. He did it well. Notice the information that Cleopas presented.

1. Jesus came from Nazareth
2. Jesus was a prophet
3. Jesus was powerful in word and in deed before God and all the people.

As you read and reread the words of Cleopas, you begin to gain some sense of his devotion to Jesus. Israel did not lack for men with the gift of powerful speech. Here was one, however, whose actions were as powerful as his speech. That was very important to them.

Cleopas then described what had happened to Jesus in recent days.

The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. Luke 24:20, 21a

Notice that Cleopas did not hold Roman authorities responsible for the death of Jesus. He accurately identified the Chief Priests and rulers as the ones who handed Him over for crucifixion.

Read the first part of 24:21 again. This is a sore lament. It is the cry of one who had believed and then decided it was for naught. The word "redeem" is "Lutroo" "λυτρόω" which means to secure release upon payment of a ransom. They had hoped that Jesus was going to secure Israel from Rome for the Jews. Many thought of Him as a military leader and not a spiritual redeemer. There were probably some who thought of Jesus as a spiritual redeemer. The vast majority, however, wanted their Messiah to declare independence from Rome.

Cleopas continued with his report of the events in Jerusalem.

*"And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place."
Luke 24:21b*

There are at least two significant considerations about why the Gospel writers stress the fact that Jesus was in the tomb for three days.

1. There were some sedatives in use then that would leave a person apparently dead for a day or two. After that, however, the person would revive. It would not take three days before the person revived. To stay in the tomb for three days eliminates these drugs as a possible explanation for the resurrection.
2. The Jews had a propensity for applying rules in as many instances as possible. The law required two or three witnesses to establish truth. It was not unusual to use the idea of three witnesses in every possible area. Three days in the tomb would fit into that category as well.

We should also remember that Jesus had hinted that He would rise on the third day. As these writers looked back over the life and teachings of Jesus, they might have realized that the three days confirmed what Jesus had said earlier.

Cleopas continued with his shocking report.

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"In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive." Luke 24:22, 23

We do not want to dwell on it, but his mention of the women brings the idea to mind. In that culture, people were not shocked if a woman expressed a strange idea or report. Unfortunately, that was expected of them. Is that involved when Cleopas mentions the women here? We do not know, but it is a strong possibility. People expected women would go to the tomb of a loved one to replenish the spices and ointments. It was a shock to all of them that the body was missing. The statement about a vision of angels would, unfortunately, be considered something that a woman would think of. It would not be taken seriously. The angelic message that Jesus was alive seemed as much like a fantasy as the missing body.

Cleopas finally shared the real shock.

"Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." Luke 24:24

Many people might expect the women to report resurrected bodies and angelic visions. The disciples checked for themselves, however, and found that the report was true. This was almost more than they could handle. It was, nevertheless, exactly what happened. The important piece of information in this whole story is that Jesus was not in the tomb.

Think, for a moment, about what this meant to Cleopas. He was trying to explain something that he could not understand. He was reporting something in which he had great personal involvement. The strain had to be formidable.

Jesus had, at this point, sufficiently engaged his traveling companions. Now He could instruct them.

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" Luke 24:25, 26

The word "foolish" comes from the word "anoetos" "ἀνόητος." It means one who is stupid or foolish. It is the opposite of sober-minded. Jesus chided the folly of these disciples. He was distressed that this situation did not remind them nor did they believe what the prophets had told them centuries before. The disciples were distressed that this terrible thing happened. Jesus wanted them to see that this apparent tragedy had to happen as the prophets had warned them. He shared with them that the unfortunate thing was not the tragic event, but their unbelief.

Verse 28 represents a time when I am personally jealous of the disciples.

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. Luke 24:27

How wonderful it must have been to hear Jesus expound everything that the Old Testament Scriptures said about Him! What did He say? What did He tell them that we have never noticed in the Old Testament? How many of our questions did He answer for them? Jesus showed that the Old Testament Scriptures point to Him. It was another claim of deity. If so, then we can learn more about Him from the Old Testament just as we can from the New Testament.

24:28-35 - Jesus Reveals Himself

Luke gave us some careful insights about Jesus and His cultural awareness.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. Luke 24:28, 29

In this passage, people sometimes think of Jesus as playing mental games, pretending. That was not so at all. Jesus simply did what was required of Him. The people of that day would have applauded His motives and actions. Jesus was dealing with the law of hospitality. You do not ask for hospitality. You wait for the host to invite you. Their way of life demanded that the local person be host to one who was traveling. He could not ignore the traveler or turn him away. Jesus was simply giving these disciples the opportunity to care for this cultural requirement. The disciples did not disappoint Jesus. They invited Him to be their guest. Jesus held back to allow them to insist that He be their guest. Only then should Jesus have accepted their invitation. This seems artificial to the western mind. We have no concept of "saving face," of establishing one's "good relationships" as they have in eastern cultures. Jesus understood this. He followed the expectations well. He did what anyone else in that culture would have done.

The host must not only provide a shelter for his guest, he must also provide food.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Luke 24:30

Up to this point, everything followed the cultural expectations to the letter. That changed. Jesus was expected to wait upon the leadership of the host. The host would ask the blessing which all Jewish people shared. The host would then break the bread and give it to his guest. It was a way to honor the guest. Jesus, in effect, became the host of the household. He gave the blessing. He broke the bread. He honored the owner of the house by giving him the bread. First century readers would have been shocked by this turn of events. It hardly touches us at all.

There was another picture involved that first century people would have understood. If you share bread with someone, you forgive and accept them. Jesus was the guest of the household, but it appears that He wanted them to know that they were completely forgiven. Their unbelief and inability to grasp spiritual truth had not separated them from Jesus.

Luke gives us a hint about the understanding of the events of verse 31.

Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him and he disappeared from their sight. Luke 24:31

This was not a celebration, but the evening meal which must be provided by the host for his traveler guest. What was there, in the breaking of bread, to show them that this was Jesus? There are several possibilities:

1. As He broke the bread, it is possible that they saw the nail prints in His hands.
2. If they had been present at the feeding of the 5,000, they may have seen something unique about the way He broke a piece of bread.

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3. There may have been something distinctive in the way He prayed that attracted their attention.
4. If you look at the Greek text, you will notice something immediately that is not as obvious in the English translations. Luke said, "Then their eyes were opened . . . " The Greek is in the passive voice. The passive voice suggests something that is done to or for you. You are the recipient of action rather than the initiator. This suggests that Jesus opened their eyes rather than their figuring out His identity.

Of these possibilities, numbers one and four seem most plausible to me. My own preference is that Jesus opened their eyes. This was Jesus' mission in the world. He was busy helping people to see who He was, to help them understand who the Father is. We will speak to this point a little bit later.

Notice the sequence of events in verse 31:

1. Their eyes were opened.
2. They recognized Jesus.
3. Jesus disappeared.

They could respond to the divine self-revelation. The word "recognized" is "epiginosko" "ἐπιγινώσκω" which means "to fully perceive." This is not general knowledge. It is a participation in that which you know. This was not just facial recognition. It was an awareness which grew out of deep interaction.

Luke then described the reaction of the two to this revelation.

They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" Luke 24:32

Put yourself in the place of the two men for a minute. They met a man to whom they witnessed concerning the events that happened to Jesus that day. He accepted their hospitality, but took the place of the host. He explained the Scriptures to them as no one had ever done before. He showed them how the Scriptures spoke of Him. Suddenly they recognize Him as Jesus and He vanished. How would you feel? There had to be consternation, confusion, perplexity, questions that needed answers. It was some of all of these. One possible reason they shared what it was like was that they did not know how to really express their deepest feelings for themselves. They best described their feelings saying that their hearts burned within them when Jesus talked with them and when he explained the message of Scripture about himself.

The discovery of Jesus is wonderful. We all respond to this exuberant experience in different ways. Luke described this in the following terms.

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven and those with them, assembled and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. Luke 24:33-35

Discovering the miracle of Jesus' presence causes people to share their discovery. Notice what Luke told us. When these two men entered the assembly of disciples, the disciples couldn't wait to tell them that Jesus had risen. At the same time these two men could

hardly wait until the disciples finished telling the good news. These two men wanted to tell them that Jesus had appeared to them as well. Notice what happened in both these revelations of Jesus:

1. There was great joy.
2. There was a burning desire to share what they had discovered.
3. The focus was on what all this said about Jesus, not on the ones who received the revelation

This is the way it is supposed to be. Repeatedly when a person comes to faith in Christ, there is a deep desire to tell others about the wonderful thing that happened. When that is not so, something is wrong.

24:36-49 - Jesus Appears to His Disciples

There is a series of revelations of Jesus in this portion of Luke's Gospel. He was revealed to the two men in Emmaus. Here he has been revealed to the eleven disciples and those gathered with them. Notice how Luke reports this miracle.

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." Luke 24:36

Unlike the earlier parts of this Gospel, Luke has become much more specific about timing. While the two disciples from Emmaus were talking with the other disciples, Jesus stood among them. The verse suggests that this appearance was sudden. John adds some information to this scene.

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." John 20:19

John confirms that it was the first day of the week as Luke implies. It was in the evening. John adds a bit of information that the others omit. He told us that Jesus came into the room while the doors were locked. He also tells us something about the atmosphere in the room. The doors were locked because of their fear of what the Jews would do to them. Put yourself in that room that night. You are rejoicing about the reports of the resurrection and some had seen and talked with Him. Suddenly Jesus stood in the midst of the close-knit group. The shock would be almost too much to handle. It is something that one would not expect to happen. There were some among the disciples who did not believe that Jesus had risen, though they had heard the reports. Now what could they say?

Luke's report was conservative.

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. Luke 24:37

The word "startled" is "ptoeo" "πτοέω" and suggests being terrified to the point of consternation or paralyzed with terror. Seeing Jesus show up, as instantaneously as He disappeared in Emmaus, immobilized the group. The word "frightened" is "emfobos" "ἐμφόβος." "Phobos" "φόβος" means "fear." "Emfobos" "ἐμφόβος" however, means to be "in fear," "to be filled to the brink in fear." These normally well-composed disciples were suddenly immobilized with fear. Unlike their normal manner, they thought that they

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had seen a ghost. All of this was because they saw Jesus and they did not think it was possible to see Him alive. Their only alternative was to believe they had seen a ghost.

Jesus responded to the frightened reaction He encountered.

He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." Luke 24:38, 39

Having greeted them with the typical Jewish greeting, Jesus asked them two questions:

1. Why are you troubled?
2. Why do doubts rise in your minds?

The word "troubled" is a form of the word "tarasso" "τράσσω" which describes "being troubled" "to be agitated like troubled water," or "to be terrified." Jesus confronted them with a serious contrast. They experienced a shock that should be a source of great joy. The truth, however, was that they were terrified by the thing that should bring joy. Why are you troubled?

It is one thing to have doubts when you are simply listening to reports. They were looking at Jesus and still they were filled with doubts. They were still wondering to themselves if they were seeing a ghost.

Jesus used five different pieces of evidence to help them believe that He was really who He said He was:

1. Jesus showed them His hands and feet. There were marks on His hands and feet that showed the scars of the crucifixion process. Remember, the nails had been driven into his hands and feet only four days previously.
2. Jesus used a way of referring to him that they had heard Him use often before. He said, "It is I myself." People who had been close to Him would recognize this practice immediately. It was a strong way of identifying himself and excluding other possibilities.
3. Jesus invited the disciples to touch Him and see that He had bones and flesh. He was dealing with the idea that He might be a ghost. This was as important later as it was then. Later, some theologians taught that the resurrected Jesus was a ghost. His remark was a way of saying, "See for yourself, I am human."

Having been offered these three pieces of evidence, still they doubted. Luke described a difficult situation that they encountered and we have all experienced.

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything to eat?" Luke 24:40, 41

They had seen the evidence for themselves. He had given them three specific pieces of evidence that should have convinced them that He was Jesus, that He was the Messiah. Nevertheless, it apparently did not bring one of them to believe, "This is Jesus, the Messiah." Simultaneously, they saw evidence that it was Jesus and their joy and excitement carried them beyond doubt to the awareness that the impossible had happened. The word "joy" is "chara" or "χαρά" which means delight" or "to rejoice." It is a

comparative. Having experienced depths of pain and sorrow, the ability to discern joyous events was sharper and deeper. The word "amazement" is "thaumadzonton" or "θαυμαζόντων." It means "to admire," "to be filled with astonishment," "to be filled with amazement," struggling to understand the astonishment and awe that grips your heart." They were caught. They saw evidence that this was Jesus. They simultaneously knew that it was impossible and therefore did not believe. This dilemma ultimately leads to frustration and inaction. That is exactly what happened to them.

4. Jesus asked for something to eat. Few things are more human than eating. We all do it every day. Luke described it this way:

*...He asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.
Luke 24:41c, 42*

Some translations include the words "and from the honeycomb." after the word "fish" in this verse. None of our best ancient documents contain these words. It is doubtful if they belong in the text. Jesus did everything possible to help them understand that He did human things. He not only ate the food, He ate it in their presence. There could be no doubt about what He was doing.

5. Jesus identified the things He had told them before the crucifixion. As a way to prove that He was Jesus, and not a ghost, he talked with them about the details of the things He taught them before His death. They would be able to verify this in their own minds without the witness of others.

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms." Luke 24:45

This verse begins with an interesting statement. Luke said, "Then he opened their minds . . ." 24:45a. Jewish people and their language are romantic, and graphic. They converse in strong visual images. Jesus did that in this chapter. Notice the visual images that Jesus used:

1. "Their eyes were opened." Luke 24:31 This image dealt with Jesus' revelation of Himself to the two men from Emmaus as He broke the bread. The Greek word for "eye" is "ophthalmos" or "ὀφθαλμός" which means "to sight," "to see." The word is used literally of the human eye. It is also used as a metaphor to describe ethical qualities or insights. It appears that Jesus used the word as a metaphor in this instance.
2. "Then he opened their minds." Luke 24:45 This image dealt with Jesus' revelation to all the disciples in Jerusalem as He tried to help them see that He was Jesus, the Messiah. The word "mind" is "nous" or "νοῦς" which refers to the human capacity for perception, the ability to reflect and understand.

These pictures were not accidental. Jewish people made a clear distinction between the mind and heart. It appears to me that Jesus spoke of "eyes" to describe the opening of the mind to understand that Jesus was the Christ. He used the word "minds" to describe the ability to perceive the message of Scripture about Himself.

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Jesus wanted them to comprehend what the Scriptures had to say about His experience.

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Luke 24:45-47

Notice that verse 45 speaks of the events that will happen to the Christ. Verse 46, however, speaks of the meaning of these events. His statement of the events is brief and to the point:

1. He will suffer.
2. He will rise from the dead on the third day.

The suffering of Jesus was not on His own behalf. He suffered because we had needs that we were unable to meet. His suffering was an expression of the love of God. The rising from the dead was an expression of the miraculous power of God. As we said earlier, the mention of the third day was very important. This sets aside the possible argument that they sedated Him for 48 hours.

In verse 46, Jesus describes what these Scriptural statements mean in our lives. It involves at least three things:

1. It involves the repentance for sins.
2. It involves the forgiveness of sins.
3. It involves the mission of the church to witness in every nation.

Repentance is important because there is one who can do something about that sin. Without the redemption of Jesus, repentance would be meaningless. It is simply owning our failure. Because of Jesus Christ, repentance is the first step in our restoration to God.

Forgiveness is a wonderful gift from God through Jesus Christ. People, in every age, have sought different ways to forgive themselves. It never happened. Forgiveness is not real unless we receive it from Jesus, our sinless redeemer.

Because we are forgiven without deserving it, there is an inner desire and a divine command to share that good news with other people. Because God loves all mankind, our task is to share this good news in every nation.

Jesus presents a contrast in verses 48 and 49.

"You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." Luke 24:48, 49

There is a vital contrast between the commission to share good news, on the one hand, and waiting for the promise of the Father on the other. Jesus has borrowed a scene from the courts as a means to describe our task. Just as an eyewitness is required to report to the court what he has seen and heard, so we are to report to the world what we have seen and heard of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives.

Having announced that we are witnesses, Jesus followed the command with a promise. This happened often with the commands Jesus gave. The command was "share good

news." The promise was that He would give us what the Father had promised. The promise of the Father was the coming of the Holy Spirit.

To the consternation of some, it is not enough that our lives have been changed. We need more. We are not fully equipped to witness until the power of the Holy Spirit has been given us by the Father. Therefore, Jesus warned,, Wait "until you have been clothed with power from on high." Notice the image that Jesus used to express this instruction - "until you have been **clothed with power from on high.**" The word for "clothed" is "enduma" or "ἐνδύμα" which means "to put something on like a garment." In the Greek, this is called a subjunctive mood. It means that this witnessing is contingent upon being clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit; having your life changed is not enough. It also requires the enabling of the Holy Spirit. We are incapable of witnessing until the power of the Holy Spirit surrounds and enables us to share good news. This is exciting for us. Notice that this clothing with the Holy Spirit is something that comes "from on high." It is something that God does, not something that any of us can do because we are wise or skilful. This, of course is illustrated in the opening chapters of the book of Acts, which Luke also wrote.

24:50-53 - The Ascension

Luke closes his report of the Gospel with a description of the ascension of Jesus. The disciples had been together in a house in Jerusalem because they were afraid. Having revealed Himself to them, Jesus now led them out of the city to Bethany. From the Greek text it could be either in Bethany or on the Mount of Olives in the vicinity of Bethany.

The first question that comes to mind is, why Bethany? If you think for a moment, Bethany was very important in the life and ministry of Jesus. This little village, two miles southeast of Jerusalem was located just across the Kidron valley from the temple mount. Bethany was the place where Jesus stayed when He came to Jerusalem. It was the home of some of His best friends. Simon the Leper lived here. It was in his home that Mary came and anointed Jesus for His burial. Mary, Martha and Lazarus also lived here. This is the place where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. This was important for two reasons:

1. This event was a primary piece of evidence that Jesus was in fact the Messiah of Israel.
2. This event was also the thing that established the popularity of Jesus for the local people and pilgrims who had gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover observance. This led to the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy concerning the Triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem.

In good rabbinic fashion, Jesus raised His hands to bless the disciples. This is what any good rabbi would do for his disciples when he left them. Luke described the scene in this manner:

When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. Luke 24:50

In our best Greek manuscript, the words "the vicinity of" do not appear. This does not mean that our translators have done violence to the text. The understanding can still be there, but the specific words are not present.

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Jesus lifted up His hands and blessed His disciples. The last thing Jesus did before the ascension was to perform the office of a priest. He raised His hands and pronounced a blessing on the disciples. I would love to know what He prayed on that occasion. We sometimes think of this group as twelve people total. That is not so. The eleven disciples and Jesus were present. There were many others present, followers of Jesus, who were not part of the eleven apostles. These people also accompanied Jesus out to the place where He ascended into heaven. Think of the parade from the house in Jerusalem out to the village on the south east side of the city. Think of the sight of Jesus being received out of their sight into heaven. The magnificence of this defies description.

Luke tells us that "He left them and **was taken up** into heaven." This was something that was done for Jesus, not something that He did on His own behalf.

Luke also describes the reaction of this host of disciples as Jesus was taken from them.

*Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.
Luke 24:52.*

The word "worshiped" comes from the word "proskuneo" or "προσκυνέω." This word means to make obeisance. This is a compound Greek word. It derives its meaning as follows:

"pros" or "προς" means "toward"

"kuneo" or "κυνέω" means "to kiss."

The word, as it is used in the text, literally means to kiss toward, to love deeply in worship, to adore in worship. The disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy. Think about that for a moment. They could earlier have been characterized as being despondant. For the first time, it appears that the disciples understood what Jesus had been saying for years about His death and resurrection. For the first time, it appears that they understand what the mission of the church was all about. Jesus did not come to cause a political revolt, as most people anticipated. He came to bring a spiritual revolution. He came to bring people back to God.

Jesus had instructed the disciples to stay in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father, had been clothed on them. Luke closes the Gospel with a report of how that was accomplished.

And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God. Luke 24:53

The natural tendency would be to go out of the city and tell people the good news about what had happened. Jesus instructed them not to do that. They obeyed those instructions. Instead they spent their time in the temple. The temple is a place of worship. Worship includes giving praise to God for His goodness. Worship includes petitioning God for the blessings one needs to serve Him more effectively. It is an opportunity to acknowledge our dependance upon God for being all that we need when we are weak. Worship is a place of contemplation, a place where we seek to discover more about who God is. We want to discover more clearly what He wants us to be. It takes both forgiveness and transformation in order to witness for God as He intends for us to do.

This Gospel record began in the distress of Zechariah, but it ended in the elated disciples praising God for their resurrected and ascended Lord.

Conclusion

What a chapter! Imagine what it would have been like to be in that house in Jerusalem or on that Bethany hillside.

We talk about the resurrection a lot. Perhaps we take it for granted. Think of the difference it would make if the bones of Mohammed were **not** in that tomb near Mecca. Their leader is dead. Jesus is alive and has destroyed the power of death on our behalf.

Can you imagine what it was like for Cleopas and his Christian brother to hear Jesus explain what the Scriptures said about Him? I am sure we would discover many understandings and explanations that we have overlooked all our lives.

Can you describe that enormous experience of seeing the marks on the hands and feet of the resurrected Jesus? Can you put into words what it would be like to have Jesus point out all the human qualities that mark His resurrected life as Jesus of Nazareth?

Think of the ecstasy of seeing Jesus rise out of the midst of His gathered disciples as He blessed them on that hillside! Think of the joy of obeying Jesus instruction to stay in the city until the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father, came upon you.

These are wonderful, fascinating, exuberant experiences. They grab our attention and imagination immediately.

A more enduring question lies in the background. What will be different in your life because you know that Jesus has risen from the dead and has ascended to the Father? What changes will you make, now, because you have focused on these life changing principles concerning the resurrection and the ascension?

THE CONCLUSION

Twenty-five percent of Luke's Gospel, or the closing six chapters, deal with one week in the life of Jesus. The first 18 chapters, or seventy-five percent of the book, cover 33-1/2 years of the life of Jesus. It is very clear that Luke's emphasis is focused on the concluding six chapters of the book. The entire book is important, but the first 18 chapters set the stage so that the major emphasis, chapters 19 to 24, can be seen in their proper light.

In 18 chapters, or seventy-five percent of the book, Jesus is teaching in one forum or another. This is a major emphasis of the book.

In 10 chapters, or forty-two percent of the book, there is at least one report of Jesus healing the sick or performing a miracle. In several of these chapters there are more than one report of Jesus healing the sick. In some instances it just says that He healed all the sick who were brought to Him.

Each of the other Gospel records focuses upon a single idea about Jesus. Matthew focuses entirely upon Jesus as King. Mark zeros in on the servanthood of Jesus. John, on the other hand, directs your attention completely toward the deity of Christ.

The Gospel of Luke, however, casts two basic truths in juxta-position to each other. On the one hand, there is a serious emphasis on Jesus' humanity. Luke particularly stresses this humanity in more detail and precision than other writers.

At the same time, Luke stresses that Jesus is the Messiah. Though Luke was written to Gentile readers, no Jew could miss the Messianic message of chapter one. This Gospel of the life of Jesus begins with the birth of John the Baptist whom Luke describes in two ways:

1. John is the Elijah who precedes the Messiah.
2. John is the Herald who announces the coming of the king.

One might describe Luke's picture of Jesus as "the God-man." This entwined message of human-yet-divine traces its way through each chapter of the Gospel.

Let me show you, from each chapter, some of the things that Luke uses to make such a focus:

CHAPTER ONE - THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

The birth of John the Baptist is a fitting way to begin the story of Jesus. John is presented as the herald who goes before the king. John's father, Zechariah, sings a prophetic song in which he identified his son as the Prophet of the Most High. Zechariah identified Jesus as Messiah, the human-divine king of kings.

CHAPTER TWO - THE BIRTH OF JESUS

The angels told the shepherds that a savior was born. This child, Jesus, was the Savior, the Messiah. The angel also called Him "Lord." This name is the translation of "Adonai" in the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament. The prophecies of Simon and Anna confirmed the angelic announcement.

CHAPTER THREE - THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

John the Baptist began his ministry as the Herald of the Messiah, the Elijah who must come first. John's work as herald took three forms:

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1. He preached the sinfulness of sin and the need for forgiveness.
2. He identified Jesus as "the Lamb of God," the one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.
3. He baptized Jesus to signal the beginning of Jesus' priestly ministry.

John announced the coming of the king whose kingdom is eternal; the Messiah who was literally his cousin. Luke closes the chapter with the genealogy of Jesus traced from Adam, through Mary, and then proclaims Jesus "the Son of God."

CHAPTER FOUR - AFTER THE TEMPTATION, JESUS TAUGHT AND HEALED

Temptation is a common denominator of humanity. The unique quality of this temptation was that He did not sin. Jesus was the sinless man, the God-man. Though Jesus was thrown out of the Nazareth synagogue, He proclaimed Himself the Messiah. He identified Himself with the year of Jubilee as they knew Messiah would do. Jesus healed the demoniac and Peter's mother-in-law at Capernaum. These are signs of His divine power expressed in human form.

CHAPTER FIVE - JESUS CALLED HIS DISCIPLES

The rhythm of chapter five is obvious. Luke tells of the call of Peter, James and John. He followed this with a report of the cleansing of the leper and the palsied man let down through the roof. Again, Luke reports the call of Levi to discipleship. Luke followed this with a report of Jesus' entertainment in Levi's home and His defense of His disciples not fasting as the Pharisees did.

"The God-man" set the course for His entire ministry. He challenged the shackling rules of the Pharisees as well as the assumption that tax collectors were not redeemable. He claimed mercy as the centerpiece of His life - He healed the sick and restored the sinful.

CHAPTER SIX - THE BEATITUDES

Jesus established the nature of His kingdom. He did this by saying the kingdom of God is not the bondage of Pharisaic regulations. The rule of grace views God's commands as support and strength for mankind rather than bondage.

The Beatitudes describe a way of life that identifies the merciful, graceful character of Messiah's kingdom now and hereafter. This is grace in triumph over legalism.

CHAPTER SEVEN - JESUS HEALED CENTURION'S SERVANT; WIDOW'S SON

This chapter is filled with the miraculous healing reports and Jesus' teachings. To the apparent shock of many Jews, Jesus healed the centurion's servant, probably a Gentile. At Nain, Jesus raised the dead son of a widow to life again. The raising of the dead was one of the required signs of the Messiah. It is not accidental that in the midst of healing and teaching, Jesus forgave the "fallen woman." He shocked the "good people" by suggesting that everyone could be forgiven.

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CHAPTER EIGHT - JESUS TEACHES AND HEALS IN GALILEE

Jesus taught the crowds what His kingdom was like. He focused on spiritual growth, not an attachment to a set of strict rules. He taught them to share their light rather than taking pride in spiritual exclusiveness. He taught that spiritual family superseded physical family when there was conflict between the two.

In the midst of this kingdom teaching, Jesus spoke and a violent storm became still. In the healing of the demoniac, the demon called Jesus, "the Son of the Most High God." Jesus showed His divine power: He commanded and the demons obeyed. Jesus raised Jairus' daughter and healed the woman with the issue of blood.

CHAPTER NINE - THE TRANSFIGURATION

Jesus not only had power to heal, He gave it to others as well. Jesus fed the 5,000 using only a small boy's lunch. Like a diamond surrounded by a setting of pearls, the transfiguration is surrounded by miracles and the healing of the sick. The glory of the transfiguration was not the presence of Moses and Elijah, or Jesus' shining countenance. It was the voice from the cloud which said, "This is my Son, listen to him." Luke 9:35

CHAPTER TEN - THE SEVENTY ARE SENT TO WITNESS

Jesus sent disciples to preach the kingdom as He had taught them. He pronounced a prophetic "woe" against decadent cities. The "God-man" must be a prophet. He prophesied His own death. Despite intense opposition from Jews and Gentiles alike, He taught a discipleship that was costly, but worthwhile. He was a man among men, but the Son of God.

CHAPTER ELEVEN - WOES ON PHARISEES AND LAWYERS

Like a good Rabbi, Jesus taught His disciples to pray. He used many words from some of their traditional prayers. The difference was not in the beauty of the words, but in the motive and sincerity of the one who prayed. Jesus cast out demons, but He also taught His disciples the desperate need to share the light with which God had blessed them.

Jesus exercised His prophetic office pronouncing "woes" on the Pharisees and lawyers. Jesus denounced selfish abuses and pleaded for purity, righteousness and concern for the needy.

CHAPTER TWELVE - JESUS TEACHES ABOUT PERSECUTION

People tend to see persecution as breaches in God's plan and care. Jesus taught them that it was a vital, inevitable product of His care and presence. God will guide in the midst of their trial, not just helping them escape it.

Jesus taught the disciples that the lack of faith and a focus on possessions would cause great fear in persecution. In a world permeated by unrighteousness, the righteous will be increasingly challenged and abused. This was one more way in which His divine orientation cut across human values and directions.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN - JESUS TEACHES PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

The kingdom of God is a different kind of kingdom. Jesus identified the means of expanding the kingdom as permeating the community like leaven, not confronting the opposition like an army. The kingdom appeals to the few and not to the many. Jesus wept

over the city where religious enemies would one day take His life. The "God-man" presented the nature of His kingdom as one that pleased God, but not the multitudes, especially not the religious leaders.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN - JESUS HEALS AND TEACHES IN A PHARISEE'S HOME

Jesus accepted hospitality though it was motivated by deceit. He was more concerned about healing a man with dropsy than with keeping all the man-made rules of the Pharisees. Messiah's kingdom focused on humility, not on pride. This kingdom required the primary commitment of its citizens; secondary commitment was not enough. Discipleship is costly and He wants followers who are willing to pay the price. Citizens of His kingdom are beneficial to the kingdom as they influence the lives of others. It is a high standard; it is divine.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN - JESUS TEACHES THREE PARABLES ABOUT LOSTNESS

The three parables about lostness identify the care of Jesus and the Father for the lost. No effort was too great; no price too much to pay to reclaim the lost. The real issue is the depth of divine love for wandering lost ones. Kings thrive on power, positions and possessions. This king of kings thrives on love and mercy.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN - JESUS TEACHES THE DISCIPLES

Jesus taught that His kingdom-members should be as prudent as non-members are about their economic future, without adopting a pagan lifestyle. Jesus also taught about the future bliss of His citizens and the future punishment of others.

Again, the kingdom of the Messiah is unique, but worthwhile seeking.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN - JESUS HEALS AND TEACHES: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Again, kingdom conditions are unique. Where else can one be forgiven when he has sinned repeatedly?

Luke speaks of the Twelve as "Apostles." This is a royal image suggesting one who is sent to represent the person and interests of another. Jesus taught the tough message that obedience is the minimum requirement in the kingdom.

The "God-man" possessed all power, but he had compassion on those who came to Him to be healed. Jesus taught often and carefully because it is difficult to disassociate His kingdom from the usual image of an earthly kingdom.

Part of the power to rule is the power to prosecute disobedience. This king has mercy on the helpless, but punishes those who flaunt the law of the kingdom.

Here, again, we see a very human Jesus presented as a king of an eternal kingdom.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN - JESUS TEACHES; HEALED BLIND MAN

Jesus continued teaching about the nature of His kingdom. Much of this chapter deals with prayer for the kingdom-members. They pray with deep intensity. They pray to be heard and answered by God, not to be seen and approved of by others. Kingdom-members pray and live a life of ultimate commitment to their king, a truth the rich young man could not accept in practice. In Jericho, as Jesus approached Jerusalem, he met and healed an

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insistent blind man. Power mixed with mercy is a vital part of the Messiah's outreach to those in need.

CHAPTER NINETEEN - JESUS' TRI-UMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

In chapter 5, Jesus called Levi. In chapter 19, Jesus called Zacchaeus. As we know, both men were outcasts, tax collectors, but Jesus loved them.

The Triumphal Entry was a crowning point in the presentation of Jesus as King. He rode into Jerusalem on a white donkey, as the peaceful king would ride. The people acclaimed His coming as the Old Testament prophesied Messiah would come. It is a vivid image of the royal Messiah. The "God-man" went to the temple, not the palace. His emphasis, in the temple, was purity, not power.

CHAPTER TWENTY - JESUS PUBLICLY CHALLENGED BY SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

The authority acclaimed by the people at the city gates was challenged by the chief priests as Jesus cleansed the temple. This is evidence that He is the "Lord," the ruler over all. In this chapter, He tells more about the character of His kingdom. It is a merciful kingdom when people rebel, but a just kingdom when people will not change.

It is a kingdom that can pay tribute because it is not focused upon armies or people greedy for power. It is a kingdom which changes the character of earthly kingdoms now and rules eternally when nations are done away. It is a kingdom where death is not the final enemy, for the redeemed will live eternally. Contrary to what religious leaders of that day did, this is a kingdom where the King's actions are as humble, loving and caring as His words.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE - JESUS TAUGHT THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE AND JERUSALEM.

Jesus continued to share the uniqueness of His kingdom. A widow's tiny coins were more than huge gifts from the rich. It was, by contrast, a kingdom which was not dependant upon a temple as a symbolic place of worship. The kingdom will stand, but the temple will be totally destroyed.

This is a kingdom whose coming requires watchfulness. That kingdom will come quickly, but because it differs from other kingdoms so drastically, it may be violent.

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO - THE LAST SUPPER; JESUS' ARREST AND TRIAL

The stress of this special Passover Feast is that it highlights the spiritual nature of this kingdom. The experience we call "the Lord's Supper" exposes the intimate relationship in the kingdom. It is not characterized by treaties. It is sustained by relationships of forgiveness(bread) and commitment (wine.) It centers around the mercy and power of God (Passover.) The "God-man" binds himself eternally and without condition to His people. All this in the presence of one who He knew would betray Him and all the others who would abandon and deny Him.

This kingdom does not flee to seek more comfortable, compatible conditions. It accepts whatever may come as a result of its stance. It is made up of people who love God, but in their humanity, they fail and are forgiven.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

The king, "the God-man," took total responsibility for our sin and failure in order to purchase our redemption.

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE - THE CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH OF JESUS

Neither religious nor political tribunals had power over this king, yet He submitted Himself to their control to the point of death. He did this in spite of the fact that false charges were intentionally brought against Him.

His power was not reduced though He endured abuse and humiliation and eventually death at their hands.

In His impending death, the "God-man" expressed great care for people who would ultimately be involved in the destruction of the city.

He was not degraded when accosted by a murderer, nor was He above forgiving a murderer who repented. He even asked the Father to forgive those who were responsible for His death. The "God-man," the Redeemer, was in all things loving and forgiving.

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR - THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS

Many other men had been crucified. Unlike the others, Jesus was not conquered by death. He died as every other human being, but He conquered death; He rose again. The miracle of His resurrection was not shrouded with secrecy. He revealed Himself to Mary, to the disciples at Emmaus, to all the disciples at Jerusalem, to over 500 people in all.

Having met the Apostles in Galilee, He ate with them, an act which suggests their forgiveness, and talked with them there. He showed Thomas the marks in His hands and side.

Finally, He took His disciples to Bethany and giving them His priestly blessing, was taken up into heaven.

This is the picture of Jesus which Luke presented. He was human in every respect. At the same time, He was just as totally the Son of God, the Messiah.